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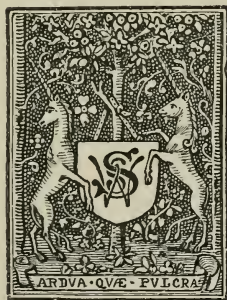
NO QUARTER

NO QUARTER!

BY

CAPTAIN MAYNE REID,

Author of "The Scalp Hunters," "The Death Shot," "The Headless Horseman," etc., etc.



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“NO QUARTER!”



CHAPTER XLVII.

OLD COMRADES.

“WELL, Dick, for a man who’s just captured a city, you look strangely downhearted — more like as if you’d been captured yourself.”

It was Colonel Robert Kyrle who made the odd observation ; he to whom it was addressed being Colonel Sir Richard Walwyn. The time was between midnight and morning, some two hours after Monmouth had succumbed to their strategic *coup-de-main*; the place Kyrle’s own quarters, whither he had conducted his old comrade-in-

arms to give him lodgment for the rest of the night.

Snug quarters they were, in every way well provided. Kyrle was a man of money, and liked good living whether he fought for King or for Parliament. A table was between them, on which were some remains of a supper, with wines of the best, and they were quaffing freely, as might be expected of soldiers after a fight or fatiguing march.

"Yet to you," added Kyrle, "Massey owes the taking of Monmouth."

"Rather say to yourself, Kyrle. Give the devil his due," returned the knight, with a peculiar smile.

Notwithstanding his serious mood at the moment, he could not resist a jest so opportune. He knew it would not offend his old comrade, as it did not. On the contrary, Kyrle seemed rather to relish it, with a light laugh rejoining,—

“Little fear of him you allude to being cheated of his dues this time. No doubt for all that’s been done I’ll get my full share of credit, however little creditable to myself. They’ll call me all sorts of names, the vilest in the Cavalier vocabulary; and, God knows, it’s got a good stock of them. What care I? Not the shaking of straw. My conscience is clear, and my conduct guided by motives I’m not ashamed of—never shall be. You know them, Walwyn?”

“I do, and respect them. I was just in the act of explaining things to Massey up by the Buckstone when your letter came—that carried in the cadger’s wooden leg.”

“Most kind of you, Dick; though nothing more than I expected. Soon as I heard of your being at the High Meadow, I made up my mind to join you there, even if I went alone as a common deserter. Never was man more disgusted with a cause than I with Cavalierism. It stinks of the

beerhouse and *bagnio* ; here in Monmouth spiced with Papistry—no improvement to its nasty savour. But the place will smell sweeter now. I'll make it. Massey has told me I'm to have command."

"You are the man for it," said the knight approvingly. "And I am glad he has given it to you. Nothing more than you're entitled to, after what you've done."

"Ah ! 'tis you who did everything — planned everything. What clever strategy your thinking of such a ruse !"

"Not half so clever as your carrying it out."

"Well, Dick, between us we did the trick neatly, didn't we ?"

"Nothing could have been better. But how near it came to miscarrying ! When they flung that Cornet in your teeth I almost gave it up."

"I confess to some misgiving myself then. It looked awkward for a while."

"That indeed. And how you got out of it ?

Your tale of his cowardice, and threat to make short work with him, were so well affected I could scarce keep from bursting into laughter. But what a simpleton that fellow who had command of the bridge guard! Was he one of those we cut down, think you?"

"I fancy he was, and fear it. Among my late comrades there were many I liked less than he."

"And the Cornet, to whom you gave credit for making such good use of his heels. Has he escaped?"

"I've no doubt he's justified what I said of him by using them again. He's one that has a way of it. I suspect a great many of them got off on the other side—more than we've netted. But we shall know in the morning when we muster the birds taken, and beat up the covers where some will be in hiding. Hopelessly for them, as I'm acquainted with every hole and corner in Monmouth."

There was a short interval of silence, while Kyrle,

as host, leant over the table, took up a flagon of sack, and replenished their empty cups. On again turning to his guest he could see that same expression, which had led to him thinking him downhearted. Quite unlike what face of man should be wearing who had so late gained glory—reaped a very harvest of laurels—on more than one battle-field. The exciting topics just discoursed upon had for a time chased it away, but there it was once more.

“Bless me, Walwyn! what is the matter with you?” asked Kyrle, as he pushed the refilled goblet towards him. “You could not look more sadly solemn if I were Prince Rupert, and you my prisoner. Well, old comrade,” he went on, without waiting for explanation, “if what’s troubling you be a secret, I shan’t press you to answer. A love affair, I suppose, so won’t say another word.”

“It *is* a love affair in a way.”

“Well, Walwyn! you’re the last man I’d have looked for to get his heart entangled——”

"You mistake, Kyrle. It has nothing to do with my heart—in the sense you're thinking of."

"Whose heart then, or hearts? For there must be a pair of them."

"You know young Trevor?"

"I know all the Trevors—at least by repute."

"He I refer to is Eustace—son of Sir William, by Abergavenny."

"Ah! him I'm not personally acquainted with; though he's been here for several days—in prison. Lingen's men took him at Hollymead House, near Ruardean; brought him on to Monmouth on their way to Beachley; and going back have carried him with them to Goodrich Castle. They left but yesterday, late in the evening. He's got a wound, I believe."

"Yes. It's about that I'm uneasy. Can you tell me anything as to the nature of it? Dangerous, think you?"

"That I can't say, not having seen him myself.

Some one spoke of his arm being in a sling. Likely it's but a sword cut, or the hack of a halbert. But why are you so concerned 'about him, Dick? He's no relative of yours."

"He's dearer to me than any relative I have, Kyrle. I love him as I would a brother. Besides, one, in whom I am interested, loves him in a different way."

"Ah, yes! the lady of course; prime source and root of all evil."

"In the present case the source of something good, however. But for the lady, in all likelihood Monmouth would still be under Royalist rule—nay, I may say surely would."

"How so, Walwyn? What had she to do with the taking of Monmouth?"

"A great deal—everything. She was the instigator; her motive you may guess."

"I see; to get young Trevor out of prison. Well?"

"I had some difficulty in convincing Massey the thing was possible ; and, but for her intercession with him, I might have failed doing so. Our success at Beachley, however, settled it ; especially when I laid before him the scheme we've been so fortunate in accomplishing."

"Well, we should thank the lady for it. May I know who she is ?"

"Certainly. The daughter of Ambrose Powell, of Hollymead."

"Ah ! That explains why Trevor was there when taken ?"

"In a way, it does."

"I've but slight acquaintance with Powell, myself ; though, as neighbours, we were always on friendly terms. He and his family are now in Gloucester, are they not ?"

"They are. For a time they stayed at Bristol—up to the surrender."

"Luckily they're not there now. A sweet place

that for anything in the shape of a young lady. Master Powell may thank his good star for getting him and his out of it. Two daughters he has, if I remember rightly, with names rather singular—Sabrina and Vaga?”

“They are so named.”

“With whom is young Trevor in relations?”

“The younger, Vaga. Poor girl! she’ll be terribly disappointed when she hears of his having been carried on out of our reach, and so near being rescued!”

“Out of our reach!” said Kyrle, an odd expression coming over his features, as if some thought had struck him. “Is that so sure?”

“Why not? He’s in Goodrich Castle. You don’t think it possible for us to take it?”

“Not at present; though, by-and-by, it may be within the possibilities. No man wishes more than I to see the proud pile razed to the ground, and Henry Lingen hanged over the ruins. Many

the fright he has given my poor father with his cowardly threats. But I hope getting quits with him before the game's at an end."

"What chance then of rescuing Trevor? Have you thought of any?"

"I have. And not such a hopeless one either. You're willing to risk something to get him free?"

"Anything! My life, if need be."

"That risk will be called for; mine too, if we make the attempt I'm thinking of."

"An attempt! Tell me what it is. For heaven's sake, Kyrle, don't keep me in suspense!"

"It's this, then. Lingen, it appears, don't intend lodging any prisoners in Goodrich Castle. Since the affair at Beachley he has some fear of his castle being besieged; and in a siege the more mouths the worse for him. By the merest accident I heard all this yesterday; and that the party he took away from here will be sent on to Hereford under escort first thing to-morrow morning—

that is this morning, since it's now drawing up to it."

"I think I comprehend you, Kyrle."

"You'd be dull if you didn't, Walwyn."

"You mean for us to strike out along the Hereford Road, and intercept the escort?"

"Just so. 'Twill be venturing into the enemy's ground dangerously far; but with a bold dash we may do it."

"We *will* do it!"

"What about leave from Massey? Do you think there will be any difficulty in our getting that?"

"I don't anticipate any. In my case he can't object. My command is independent of him; the troop my own; and, though now numbering little over a hundred, they are Foresters, and I've no fear to match them against twice their count of Lingen's Lancers—the gentlemen of Hereford, as they style themselves."

"Then you agree to it? We go if Massey gives permission?"

"I go, whether he gives it or not. In fact, I don't feel much caring to ask him."

"Egad! that may be the best way, and I'm willing to risk it too. Suppose we slip out without saying a word? Time's everything. Our only chance with the escort will be to take them by surprise—an ambuscade. For that we'll have to be well along the Hereford road before daylight. I know the very spot; but we must be into the saddle at once."

"Then at once let us into it!"

CHAPTER XLVIII.

BETWEEN TWO PRISONS.

IN Parliamentary war times English roads were very different from what they are of to-day. Those of the shires bordering Wales were no better than bridle paths, generally following the routes of ancient British trackways, regardless of ups and downs. Travel over them was chiefly in the saddle or afoot, traffic by pack-horse, wheels rarely making mark on them save when some grand swell of the period transported his family from town to country house. Then it was a ponderous coach of the chariot order, swung on leathern springs—such as the gossipy Pepys and Sir Charles Grandison used to ride in—calling for at least four horses, with a retinue of attendants.

These last armed with sword and pistol for protection against robbers, but also, pioneer fashion, carrying spade and axe to fill up ruts, patch broken bridges, and cut down obstructing trees.

Where the routes ran over hills, the causeway, sunk below the level of the adjacent land, was more like the bed of a dry watercourse than a highway of travel; this due to the wear of hoof and washing away by rains. There was no Macadam then to keep the surface to its normal height by a compensating stratum of stone; and in many places the tallest horseman, on the back of a sixteen-hands horse would see a cliff on either side of him, its crest barely touchable with the stock of his whip. Often half a mile or more of this ravine-like road would be encountered, so narrow that vehicles meeting upon it could not by any possibility pass each other; one of them must needs back again, perhaps, hundreds of yards! To avoid such *contretemps*, the husbandman who

had occasion to carry corn to the mill, or produce to the market town, in his huge lumbering wain, was compelled by law to announce its approach by a jangle of big bells, or the blowing of a horn!

Yet over these ancient highways—many of them still in existence—the Roman legionaries of Ostorius Scapula had borne their victorious eagles; and along them many a Silurian warrior, standing erect in his scythe-winged chariot, was carried to conquest or defeat.

At a later period had they echoed the tramp of armed men, when Henry IV., father of Agincourt's hero, made war upon the Welsh. Later still, twice again, in the days of the gallant Llewellyn and those of the bold Glendower; and still farther down the stream of time were they stained with blood as of brother shed by brother, when England's people—those of Wales as well—King-mad and King-cursed, took a fancy, or phrensy,

to cut one another's throats about the colour of a rose.

And now, on these same roads, two centuries later, they were again engaged in a fratricidal strife, though not as before with both sides infatuated through kingcraft. One was fighting for a better cause—the best of all—a people's freedom. The first time they had struck blow for this or themselves; their stand for Magna Charta, so much vaunted, being a mere settling of disputes between barons and king; no quarrel of theirs, nor its results much gain to them. Neither would it be far from the truth to say, it was the *last* time for them to draw sword on the side of human liberty; indeed difficult to point out any war in which Great Britain has been engaged since not undertaken for the propping up of vile despotisms, or for selfish purposes equally vile, to the very latest of them—Zululand and Afghanistan, *videlicet*.

But the rebellion against Charles Stuart had a far different aim, all who upheld it being actuated by higher and nobler motives ; and, though the war was internecine, it need never be regretted. For on the part of England's people it brought out many a display of courage, devotion to virtue, and other good qualities, of which any people might be proud.

Nor was it all fruitless, though seeming so. From it we inherit such fragment of liberty as is left us, and to it all such aspirations turn. Not all stifled by the corruption which came immediately after under the rule of the Merry Monarch ; nor yet by what followed further on, during the foul reign of "Europe's first gentleman ;" and let us hope still to survive through one foreshadowing, nay, already showing, corruption great as either.

* * * * *

Though in the Parliamentary wars no great battle occurred in the counties of Monmouth or

Hereford, in both there was much partizan strife, at first chiefly along their eastern borders. Their interior districts, save during the Earl of Stamford's brief occupation, and Waller's sweeping raid, had been hitherto in the hands of the Royalists; and no traveller thought of venturing on their roads who was not prepared upon challenge to cry "For the King!"

Two routes were especially frequented; but more by warlike men than peaceful wayfarers. One of them ran due north and south between their respective capitals. The other passed through the same, but with a bow-like bend eastward, keeping to the valley of the Wye, and about midway communicating with the town of Ross. Between them lay a wild wooded district of country, the ancient kingdom of Ergyn, to this day known as the Hundred of Archenfield. Through this was a third road, leading from Goodrich Castle north-west; which, on the shoulder of a high hill, Acornbury,

some six miles south of Hereford, met the more direct route from Monmouth—the two thence continuing the same to the former city.

On the morning of the capture of Monmouth, at the earliest hour of dawn, a cavalcade was seen issuing from the gates of Goodrich Castle, and turning along this road in the direction of Hereford. It numbered nigh an hundred files, riding "by twos," a formation which the narrow trackway rendered compulsory. Most of the men comprising it carried the lance, a favourite weapon with Colonel Sir Henry Lingen, its commanding officer. But some twenty were without arms of any kind, though on horseback: the prisoners of whom Kyrle had spoken as likely to be transferred from Goodrich to the capital. The information accidentally received by him was correct; they were now in transit between the two places, escorted by nearly all the castle's garrison, Lingen himself at the head.

Had he known of Monmouth being in the hands of the enemy, he would not have been thus moving away from his stronghold. But, by some mischance, the messenger sent to apprise him of the disaster, did not reach Goodrich till after his departure for Hereford.

Nor was his errand to the latter place solely to see his prisoners safely lodged. He had other business there, with its Governor, Sir Barnabas Scudamore; hence his going along with them. For taking such a large retinue there was the same reason. Sir Barnabas contemplated an attack on Brampton Bryan Castle; so heroically defended by Lady Brilliana Harley, who had long and repeatedly foiled his attempts to take it.

The High-Sheriff of Hereford county—for such was Lingen—took delight in a grand Cavalier accompaniment—many of his followers belonging to the best families of the shire—and along the route they were all jollity, talking loud, and laugh-

ing at each *jeu d'esprit* which chanced to be sprung. Just come from hard blows at Beachley, and crowded quarters in Monmouth, they were on the way to a city of more pretension, and promising sweeter delights. Hereford was at the time a centre of distinction, full of gentry from the surrounding shires; above all, abounding in the feminine element, with many faces reputed fair. Lingen's gallants meant to have a carousal in the capital city, and knew they would there find the ways and means, with willing hosts to entertain them.

Different the thoughts of those whom they were conducting thither as captives. No such prospects to cheer or enliven them; but the reverse, as their experience of prison life had already taught them.

Most of all was Eustace Trevor dejected, for he was among them. It had been a trying week for the ex-gentleman usher. Captured, wounded—by good fortune but slightly—transported from

prison to prison, taunted as a rebel, and treated as a felon, he was even more mortified than sad. Enraged also to the end of his wits; he the proud son of Sir William Trevor to be thus submitted to ignominy and insult; he to whom, at Whitehall Palace, but two short years before, earls and dukes had shown subservience, believing him the favourite of a Queen!

Harrowing the reflections, and bitter the chagrin, he was now enduring, though the Queen had nought to do with them. All centred on a simple girl, in whose eyes he had hoped to appear a hero. Instead, he had proved himself an imbecile; been caught as in a trap! What would she—Vaga Powell—think of him now?

Oft since his capture had he anathematized his ill-fate—oft lamented it. And never more chafed at it than on this morning while being marched towards Hereford. While at Monmouth he had entertained a hope of getting rescued. A rumour

of the affair at Beachley had penetrated his prison ; and he knew Massey had been long contemplating an expedition across the Forest and over the Wye. But Hereford was in the heart of the enemy's country, a very centre of Royalist strength and rule. Not much chance of his being delivered there ; instead, every mile nearer to it the likelier his captivity to be of long continuance.

Hope had all but forsaken him ; yet, in this his darkest hour of despondence, a ray of it scintillated through his mind, once more inspiring him with thoughts of escape. For something like a possibility had presented itself, in the shape of a horse—his own. The same animal he bestrode in his combat with Sir Richard Walwyn, and that had shown such spirit after a journey of nigh fifty miles. Many a fifty miles had it borne him since, carried him safe through many a hostile encounter.

He was not riding it now, alas ! but astride the sorriest of nags. "Saladin," the name of the tried and trusty steed, had been taken from him at Hollymead, and become the property of a common soldier, one of those who had assisted in his capture, the same now having him in especial charge. For each of the prisoners was guarded by one of the escort riding alongside.

It was by a mere accidental coincidence that the late and present owners of Saladin were thus brought into juxtaposition ; and at first the former only thought of its singularity, with some vexation at having been deprived of his favourite charger, which he was not likely to recover again. By-and-by, however, the circumstance became suggestive. He knew the mettle of the horse, no man better. Perhaps, had Sir Harry Lingen, or any of his officers, known it as well, a common trooper would not have been bestriding it. But as yet the animal's merits remained undiscovered by them,

none supposing that in heels it could distance all in their cavalcade, and in bottom run them dead down.

On this, and things collateral, had Eustace Trevor commenced reflecting; hence his new-sprung hope. Wounded, with his arm in a sling, he was not bound—such precaution seeming superfluous. Besides, badly mounted as he was, any attempt at flight would have been absurd, and could but end in his being almost instantly retaken. So no one thought of his making it, save himself; but he did—had been cogitating upon it all along the way.

“If I could but get on Saladin’s back!” was his mental soliloquy, “I’d risk it. Three lengths of start—ay, one—and they might whistle after me. Their firelocks and lances all slung, pistols in the holsters buckled up; none dreaming of—Oh! were I but in that saddle!”

It was his own saddle to which he referred, now

between the legs of the trooper, who had appropriated it also.

Every now and then his eyes were turned towards the horse in keen, covetous look; which the man at length observing, said,—

“Maybe ye’d like to get him back, Master Captain? He be precious good stuff; an’ I don’t wonder if ye would. Do ye weesh it?”

It was just the question Saladin’s *ci-devant* owner desired to be asked, and he was on the eve of answering impressively, “Very much.” A reflection restraining him, he replied, in a careless indifferent way,—

“Well, I shouldn’t mind—if you care to part with him.”

“That would depend on what ye be willin’ to gie. How much?”

This was a puzzler. What had he to give? Nothing! At his capture they had stripped him clean, rifled his pockets, torn from his hat the

jewelled clasp and egret's plume—that trophy of sweet remembrance. Even since, in Monmouth gaol, they had made free with certain articles of his attire; so that he was not only unarmed and purseless, but rather shabbily dressed; anything but able to make purchase of a horse, however moderate the price.

Would the man take a promise of payment at some future time—his word for it? The proposal was made; a tempting sum offered, to be handed over soon as the would-be purchaser could have the money sent him by his friends; but rejected.

“That’s no dependence, an’ a fig for your friends!” was the coarse response of the sceptical trooper. “If ye can’t show no better surety for payin’, I hold on to the horse, an’ you maun go without him. ’Sides, Master Captain, what use the anymal to ye inside o’ a prison, where’s yer like to be shut up, Lord knows how long?”

“Ah, true!” returned the young officer, with a

sigh, and look of apparent resignation. "Still, corporal,"—the man had a *cheveron* on his sleeve—"it's killing work to ride such a brute as this. If only for the rest of the way to Hereford, I'd give something to exchange saddles with you."

"If ye had it to gie, I dare say ye would," rejoined the corporal, with a satirical grin, as he ran his eye over the bare habiliments of his prisoner. "But as ye han't, what be the use palaverin' 'bout it? Till ye can show better reezon for my accommodatin' you, we'll both stick to the saddles we be in."

This seemed to clinch the question; and for a time Eustace Trevor was silent, feeling foiled. But before going much farther a remembrance came to his aid, which promised him a better mount than the Rosinante he was riding—in short, Saladin's self. The wound he had received was a lance thrust in the left wrist—only a prick, but when done deluging the hand in blood. This

running down his fingers had almost glued them together, and the kerchief hastily wrapped round had stayed there ever since, concealing a ring which, seen by any of the Cavalier soldiers, would have been quickly cribbed. None had seen it; he himself having almost forgotten the thing, till now, with sharpened wits, he recalled its being there; knew it to be worth the accommodation denied him, and likely to obtain it.

“Well, corporal,” he said, returning to the subject, “I should have liked a ride on the horse, if only for old times’ sake, and the little chance of my ever getting one again. But I’d be sorry to have you exchange without some compensation. Still, I fancy, I can give you that without drawing upon time.”

The trooper pricked up his ears, now listening with interest. He was not inexorable; would have been willing enough to make the temporary swop, only wanted a *quid pro quo*.

“What do you say to this?” continued the young officer.

He had slipped his right hand inside the sling, and drawn forth the golden circlet, which he held out while speaking. It was a jewelled ring, the gems in cluster bedimmed with the blood that had dried and become encrusted upon them. But they sparkled enough to show it valuable; worth far more than what it was being offered for. And there was a responsive sparkle in the eyes of him who bestrode Saladin, as he hastened to say,—

“That’ll do. Bargain be it!”

CHAPTER XLIX.

AN UPHILL CHASE.

AT sight of the glistening gems a sudden change had come over the features of the trooper, their expression of surliness being displaced by that of intense cupidity. But for this he might have considered why the offer of such valuable consideration for so trifling a service. As it was, he had no suspicion of it; though on both sides the dialogue had been carried on in guarded undertone. For this their reasons were distinct, each having his own. That of the prisoner is already known; while a simple instinct had guided the corporal—a fear that the negotiation between them might not be altogether agreeable to his superiors.

More cautious than ever after declaring it a

bargain, he glanced furtively to the front, then rearward, to assure himself they had not been overheard, nor their *tête-à-tête* noticed by any of the officers.

It seemed all right, none of these being near; and his next thought was how to effect the exchange agreed upon. The files were wide apart, with very little order in the line of march—a circumstance observed by Eustace Trevor with satisfaction, as likely to help him in his design. They were passing through a district unoccupied by any enemy and where surprise was the last thing to be thought of. But even straggled out as was the troop, any transfer of horses, however adroitly done, would not only be remarked upon, but cause a block in the marching column; the which might bring about inquiry as to the reason, and the guard, if not the prisoner, into trouble.

“Ye maun ha’ patience for a bit,” said the former, in view of the difficulty. “’Tant safe for

me to be seen changin' horses on the road. But ye won't ha' long to wait; only till we get to the bottom o' that hill ye see ahead. Acornbury it be called. There we can do the thing."

"Why there?"

The question was put with a special object, apart from the questioner's impatience.

"Cause o' an inn that be theer. It stand this side o' where the pitch begins. The Sheriff always stops at it goin' from Goodrich to Hereford, an' he be sure o' makin' halt the day. When's we be halted—ye comprehend, Captain?"

The man had grown civil almost to friendliness. The prospect of becoming possessed of a valuable ring for but an hour's loan of his new horse had worked wonders. Could he but have known that he was hypothecating the more valuable animal with but slight chance of redeeming it, the bargain would have been off on the instant. His avarice blinded him; and his prisoner now felt good as

sure he would soon have Saladin once more between his knees.

"I do comprehend—quite," was the young officer's satisfied response ; and they rode on without further speech, both purposely refraining from it.

The corporal might have saved his breath in imparting the situation of the inn under Acornbury Hill. Eustace Trevor knew the house well as he ; perhaps better, having more than once baited his horse there. Familiar was he with the roads and country around, not so far from his native place by Abergavenny. Besides, he had an uncle who lived nearer, and as a boy, with his cousins, had ridden and sported all over the district. This topographical knowledge was now likely to stand him in stead ; and as he thought of the Monmouth road joining that he was on near the head of Acornbury pitch, he fairly trembled with excitement. Could he but reach their point of junction on Saladin's back he would be free.

How he longed to arrive at the roadside hostelry! Every second seemed a minute, every minute an hour!

It was reached at length, and his suspense brought to an end. True to expectation, a halt was commanded; and the extended line, closing up, came to a stand on the open ground before the inn. A scrambling house of antique architecture, its swing sign suspended from the limb of an oaken giant, whose spreading branches shadowed a large space in front.

Under this Lingen and his officers made stop, still keeping to their saddles, and calling to Boniface and his assistants to serve them there. It was only for a draught they had drawn up, the journey too short to need resting their horses. Nor was there any dismounting among the rank and file rearward, save where some trooper whose girths had got loosened took the opportunity to drop down and tighten them.

Seeming to do the same was the corporal in charge of Eustace Trevor, his prisoner too, both on the ground together. Only an instant till they were in the saddle again, but with changed horses, and the blood-crusted ring at the bottom of the corporal's pocket.

Meanwhile the officers under the tree had got served, and, cups in hand, were quaffing joyously. In high glee all ; for the sun, now well up, promised a day gloriously fine, and they were about to make entry into Hereford with flying colours. Nearly twenty prisoners, it would be as a triumphal procession.

A cry, strangely intoned, brought their merriment to an abrupt end ; a chorus of shouts, quick following with the clatter of hoofs. Turning, they saw one on horseback just parting from the troop, as if his horse had bolted and was running away with him !

But no. "Prisoner escaping !" came the call,

as every one could now see it was. The man in rich garb, but soiled and torn; the horse a bit of blood none of their prisoners had been riding. One of the officers they had taken—which?

The question was answered by the High Sheriff himself—

“Zounds! it’s that young renegade, Trevor! He mustn’t escape, gentlemen. All after him!”

Down went tankards and flagons, dashed to the ground, spilling the wine they had not time to drink; and off all set, swords drawn, and spurs buried rowel deep.

The common men, save those cumbered with prisoners, joined in the pursuit; some unslinging lances or firelocks, others plucking pistols from their holsters.

“Shoot!” shouted Lingen. “Bring him down, or the horse!”

It was the critical moment for the fugitive, and in modern days would have been fatal to him.

But the old *snap-hans* and clumsy horse pistol of the Stuart times were little reliable for a shot upon the wing, and as a winged bird Saladin was sweeping away. Both volley and straggling fire failed to stay him; and ere the pursuers were well laid on, the pursued was at least fifty lengths ahead of the foremost.

Up the hill, towards Hereford, was he heading! This a surprise to all. In that direction were only his enemies; and he could as easily have gone off in the opposite, with hope of getting to Gloucester. At starting he had even to pass the group of officers under the tree. And why setting his face for Hereford—as it were rushing out of one trap to run into another?

He knew better. Fleeing to the capital of the county was the farthest thing from his thoughts. His goal was Monmouth; but first the forking of the roads on the shoulder of Acornbury Hill. That reached, with no *contretemps* between, he

might bid defiance to the clattering ruck in his rear.

The distance he was so rapidly gaining upon them told him he had not been mistaken about the superior qualities of his steed. If the latter should show bottom as it already had heels, his chances of escape were good. And the omens seemed all in his favour: his own horse so oddly restored to him; the luck of that ring left unpilfered during his imprisonment; and, lastly, to have come unscathed out of the shower of bullets sent after him! They had hustled past his ears, not one touching him or the horse.

He thought of these things when far enough ahead to reflect; and the farther he rode the greater grew his confidence. Saladin would be sure to justify his good opinion of him.

And Saladin seemed to quite comprehend the situation. He at least knew his real owner and master was once more on his back, which meant

something. And having received word and sign for best speed—the first “On!” the last a peculiar pressure of the rider’s knees—he needed no urging of whip or spur. Without them he was doing his utmost.

Up the pitch went he as hare against hill; up the channel-like trackway between escarpments of the old red sandstone that looked like artificial walls; on upward, breasting the steep with as much apparent ease as though he galloped along level ground. No fear of anything equine overtaking him; no danger now, for the pursuers were out of sight round many turnings of the road; the hue and cry was growing fainter and farther off, and the stone which marked the forking of the routes would soon be in sight.

Eustace Trevor’s heart throbbed with emotions it had long been a stranger to, for they were sweet. He now felt good as sure he would get off, and to escape in such fashion would do something to

restore his soldierly repute, forfeited by the affair of Hollymead. Nothing had more exasperated him than his facile capture there; above all, the light in which a certain lady would regard it; but now he could claim credit for a deed——

“Not done yet!” was his muttered exclamation, interrupting the pleasant train of thought, as he reined his horse to a sudden halt.

He was approaching the head of the pitch, had almost surmounted it, when he saw what seemed to tell him his attempt at escape was a failure; all his strategy, with the swiftness of his steed, to no purpose. A party of mounted men, just breaking cover from among some trees, and aligning themselves across the road. At the same instant came the customary hail,—

“Who are you for?”

The dazzle of the sun right before his face, and behind their backs, hindered his seeing aught to give a clue to their character—only the glance of

arms and accoutrements proclaiming them soldiers. And as no soldiers were like to be there save on the Royalist side, to declare himself truthfully, and respond "For the Parliament," would be to pronounce his own doom. Yet he hated in his heart to cry "For the King." Nor would the deception serve him. They coming on behind would soon be up, and lay it bare.

He glanced to right and left, only to see that he was still between high banks of the sunken causeway. On neither side a possibility of scaling them to escape across country. It was but a question, then, to which he should surrender—the foe in front, or that he had late eluded?

There was not much to choose between them; in either case he would be returned to the Sheriff of Hereford; but to cut short suspense he decided on giving himself up at once. The road was blocked by the party of horse, and, weaponless, to attempt running the gauntlet of them would be

to get piked out of his saddle, or cut to pieces in it.

These observations and reflections occupied but an instant, to end in his responding,—

“For the Parliament !”

He might as well make a clean breast of it, and tell the truth.

“We see you are. Come on !”

Surprised was he at the rejoinder as at the voice that gave utterance to it, which seemed familiar to him. But his surprise became astonishment when the speaker added, “Quick, Trevor ! we’re in ambuscade” ; and drawing nearer, the sun now out of his eyes, he saw that well-known banneret, with sword-pierced crown in its field, waving above the head of Sir Richard Walwyn !

CHAPTER L.

AN AMBUSCADE.

STEAMING at the nostrils Saladin was for the second time brought to a stand, head to head with old stable comrades that snorted recognition. For with Colonel Walwyn was Rob Wilde and others of his troop.

A hurried explanation ensued, Sir Richard first asking,—

“Your guards? You were being escorted?”

“Yes; I’ve given them the slip.”

“Where are they now?”

“Coming up the hill—you hear them?”

“Hush!” enjoined the knight, speaking to those around him; and all became silent, listening.

Voices, with a quick trample of hoofs, and at short intervals a call as of command, from far below and but faintly heard. The road was almost subterranean, and wound up through a dense wood.

"What's their number?" again questioned the knight.

"Nigh two hundred—nearly all Lingen's force—and about twenty prisoners."

"Is Lingen with them?" eagerly asked an officer by Sir Richard's side, who seemed to share the command with him.

"Colonel Kyrle—Captain Trevor," said the knight, introducing them. "I suppose you're aware we've taken Monmouth?"

"I was not ; but am happy to hear it. Yes, Colonel," replying to Kyrle, "Lingen is with them ; coming on in the pursuit."

Over the features of the ex-Royalist came an expression of almost savage joy, as one who had

been longing to confront an old and hated foe, and knew the opportunity near.

"I'm glad!" he exclaimed, as in soliloquy; then seemed to busy himself about his arms.

"His presence was near being a sorry thing for me—the inhuman scoundrel!" rejoined the escaped prisoner.

"How so?"

"I heard him give the order to fire on me, as I was making off."

"And they did?"

"Yes. Every one who could get piece, or pistol, ready in time."

"That explains the shots we heard, Walwyn. Well, young sir," to Trevor, "you seem to bear a charmed life. But we must back into ambush. You take the right, Dick; let me look to the left, and give the cue to fall on. I ask that from my better knowing the ground."

"So be it!" assented Sir Richard, and the two

commanders, parting right and left, rode back a little way within the wood, where each had a body of horse drawn up, and ready for the charge.

The conversation, hurriedly carried on, had consumed but a few seconds' time; and in an instant after the causeway was clear again, only a vidette left under cover to signal the approach of the pursuers. Captain Trevor, of course, went with his colonel, but now carrying a sword and pistols; supernumerary weapons which had been found for him by Sergeant Wilde.

A profound silence succeeded; for the horses of the Parliamentarians, after two years' campaigning, had become veterans as the men themselves, and trained to keeping still. Not a neigh uttered; no noise save the slight tinkle of curb or bit, and an occasional angry stamp at bite of the *bree* fly. But the one could not be distinguished, even at short distance, amid the continuous screeching of jays, and oft-repeated *glu-glu-gluck* of the green wood-

pecker, whose domain was being intruded on ; while the other might be mistaken for colts at pasture.

To the surprise of all in ambush, the pursuing party appeared to be coming on very slowly ; and in truth was it so. Two reasons retarded them. Their horses were not Saladins, and the best of them had become blown in their gallop against the steep acclivity more than a mile in length. But the riders themselves had grown discouraged. In their last glimpse got of the fugitive he was so far ahead, and his mount showing such matchless speed, it seemed idle to continue the chase. They but hoped that some chance party of Scudamore's men from Hereford might be patrolling the road farther on, and intercept him. So, instead of pressing the pursuit with ardour, they lagged on it ; toiling up the steep in straggled line, and at a crawl.

Some twenty of the best horsed, however, had

forged a long distance ahead of the others, who were following in twos and threes, with wide intervals between. And among the laggards was Lingen, instead of in the lead, as might be expected in the commander of a partisan troop. Fond of display, and that day designing exhibition of it, he rode a charger of superb appearance ; one of the sort for show, not work. As a consequence, after the first spurt of the pursuit, he had fallen hundreds of yards behind, and was half inclined to turn round and ride back to the inn, under pretence of looking after his other prisoners.

But there was no going back for those who had pushed on, nor much farther forward. Having surmounted the summit of the pitch, they heard a heavy trampling of hoofs, with the dreaded slogan, "God and the Parliament !" and saw two large bodies of horse, one on each flank, simultaneously closing upon them. At a charging gallop these came on, so quick the surprised

party had no time either to turn back or make a dash onward, ere seeing the road blocked before and behind.

A surround complete as sudden, accompanied by the demand "Surrender!" made in tone of determination that would not brook refusal.

Of the score of Cavaliers so challenged, not one had the heart to say nay. They had left their courage below with their spilled wine cups, and now cried "Quarter!" in very chorus, delivering up their arms without striking blow, or firing shot.

"Where's Harry Lingen?" cried Kyrle, spurring into their midst with drawn sword. "I don't see his face among you." Adding, with a sneer, "Such a valiant leader should be at the head of his men!"

Then fixing on one he knew to be a cornet of Lingen's Light Horse, he vociferated,—

"Say where your colonel is, sirrah! or I'll run you through the ribs."

"Down the hill—behind somewhere," stammered out the threatened subaltern. "He was with us when we commenced the pursuit."

Riding clear of the crowd Kyrle glanced interrogatively down the road. To see the tails of horses disappearing round a corner; some of the pursuers, who, catching sight of what was above, had made about face, and were galloping back.

"Let us after them, Walwyn! What say you?" hurriedly proposed Kyrle.

"Just what I was thinking of. Trevor tells me most of their prisoners are my own men, those taken at Hollymead. They shall be rescued, whatever the risk."

"Not much risk now, I fancy. Lingen's lot are so demoralized they won't stand a charge. We needn't fear following them up to the gates of Goodrich Castle. And we can get back to Monmouth that way, well as the other."

"That way we go, then" said the knight deter-

minedly ; and down the pitch started the two colonels with their respective followers, a detail having been hastily told off to guard the prisoners just taken.

Meanwhile the Sheriff had been balancing between advance and return. Vexed with the cause which retarded him, he was vowing he would never again bestride the showy brute, when he saw several of his men coming back down the pitch at breakneck speed, as they approached calling out, "Treason! A surprise!"

"Treason! What mean you?" he demanded, drawing his sword, and stopping them in their headlong flight. "Are you mad, fellows?"

"No, Colonel ; not mad. Some one has betrayed us into an ambushade. The Roundheads are up the hill ; hundreds—thousands of them !"

"Who says so?"

"We saw them, Sir Henry."

"You couldn't have seen Roundheads. There

are none on these roads. It must be some of Scudamore's men from Hereford. Fools! you've been frightened at your own shadows."

"But, Colonel, they've taken a party of ours prisoners; all that were ahead of us. We heard the 'Surrender!' and saw them surrounded."

"I shall see it myself before I believe it. About, and on with me!"

The men thus commanded, however reluctant to return towards the summit, knew better than to disobey. But their obedience was not insisted upon. In the narrow way, ere he could pass to place himself at their head, a horseman came galloping from below, and pulled up by his side. A courier with horse in a lather of sweat, showing he must have ridden far and fast. But the slip of paper, hurriedly drawn from his doublet and handed to the Sheriff, told all.

Unfolding it, he read,—

"Kyrle has betrayed us. Massey in Monmouth.

Large body of Horse—several hundred—Walwyn's Forest troop, and some of Kyrle's old hands with the traitor himself, gone out along the Hereford road this morning before daybreak. Destination not known. Be on your guard."

The informal despatch, which showed signs of being written in great haste, was without any signature. None was needed; the bearer, personally known to Lingen, giving further details *vivâ voce*; while its contents too truly confirmed the report just brought by the soldiers from the other side.

Among Cavaliers Sir Henry Lingen was of the bravest, and would not cry back from any encounter with fair chances. But he was not foolhardy, nor lacking prudence when the occasion called for it. And there seemed such occasion now. He knew something of Sir Richard Walwyn and his Foresters, as also of Kyrle and his following, and what he might expect from both.

They would not likely be out that way unless in strong force. Several hundred, the despatch said—pity it was not more exact—while his own numbered less than two. Besides, if the returning soldiers were not mistaken, twenty of them had been already snapped up; and the rest would make but a poor fight, if they stood ground at all. He rather thought they would not now; and so reflecting reined his unwieldy charger round, and rode back down the pitch, at a much better pace than he had ascended it.

Picking up all stragglers on the way, he meant doing the same with his prisoners left at the inn. But before he had even reached it, he heard hoof-strokes thundering down the hill behind in a multitudinous clatter, that bespoke a large body of horse coming close upon his heels. So close, he no longer thought of cumbering himself with prisoners, but swept on past those at the hostelry in a *sauve qui peut* flight, their guards going

along, and leaving them there in a state of supreme bewilderment.

Not long, however, till they understood why they had been so abruptly abandoned. . In less than five minutes after, broke upon their view the banner of the sword-stabbed crown, and beneath it coats of Lincoln green, with hats plumed from the tail of Chanticleer, the uniform of the Forest troop—their own.

In a trice they were freed from their fastenings, and armed with the weapons taken from the party of Cavaliers that had been caught by the head of the pitch. Riding their horses, too, after a quick exchange—in short, everything reversed—then away from their halting-place with cheers and at charging gallop, no longer prisoners, but pursuers!

Never did the chances and changes of war receive better or more singular illustration than upon that autumn's morn along the road between Acornbury and Goodrich. At early daybreak a Royalist

host, in noisy jubilation, conducting a score of dejected captives towards Hereford; and, before the sun had attained meridian height, a like number of prisoners going in the opposite direction, under guard of Parliamentary soldiers!

Some difference, however, in the mode of march and rate of speed: the former leisurely slow, as a triumphal procession; the latter a hot, eager pursuit that permitted no tarrying by the way. Nor was there on the return passage either jesting or laughter; instead, now and then shouts in stern, angry tone—the demand, “Surrender!” as some fleeing Cavalier, cursed with a short-winded horse, had to pull up, and call out “Quarter!”

So on to the gates of Goodrich Castle, into which Lingen, *malgré* his indifferent mount, contrived to enter, quick closing them behind.

The pursuit could go no farther, nor the pursuers make entrance after him. In that strong fortress he might bid defiance to cavalry—even

the best artillery of the time. Famine only had he to fear.

But to so shut him up—so humiliate him—was a triumph for Kyrle, his ancient foe ; and as the latter turned away from the defying walls, the smile upon his face told how greatly it gratified him. A *revanche* he had gained for some wrongs Lingen had done his father ; and, now that he was himself to rule in Monmouth, he had hopes, ere long, to make a real revenge of it, by razing Goodrich Castle to its foundation stones.

CHAPTER LI.

IN CAROUSAL.

“ We’ll drink—drink,
And our goblets clink,
Quaffing the blood red wine ;
The wenches we’ll toast,
And the Roundheads we’ll roast,
The Croppies, and all their kind.”

“ A CAPITAL song ! And right well you’ve sung it, Sir Thomas. *Herrlich !*”

“ Your Highness compliments me.”

“ *Nein-nein.* But who composed the ditty ? It’s new to me.”

“ Sir John Denham. He who wrote the verses about Waller, and their defeat at Roundway Down—

‘ Great William the Con——
So fast did he run,
That he left half his name behind him.’

Your Highness may remember them ?”

‘Ha-ha-ha! That do I; and Sir John himself. A true Cavalier, and no better company over the cup. But come, gentlemen! Let us act up to the spirit of the song. Fill goblets, and toast the wenches!’

“The wenches! The wenches!” came in responsive echo from all sides of the table, as the wine went to their lips.

No sentiment could have been more congenial to those who had been listening to Colonel Lunford’s song. For it was this man of infamous memory who had been addressed as “Sir Thomas.” He had late received knighthood from his King; such being the sort Kings delight to honour, now as then. And among the *convives* was a King’s son, the embryo “Merry Monarch,” taking lessons in that reprobacy he afterwards practised to the bestumping England from lordly palace to lowly cot.

It was not he, however, who had complimented

Lunsford on his vocal abilities ; the "Highness" being his cousin, Prince Rupert, in whose quarters they were carousing ; the place Bristol ; the time some weeks subsequent to the taking of Monmouth by Massey. But the occasion which had called them together was to celebrate a success on the opposite side ; its re-capture by the Royalists, for Monmouth had been re-taken. A sad mischance for the Parliamentarians ; through no fault of Kyrle, who, on active duty, was away from it, but the *lache* of one Major Throgmorton, left in temporary charge.

Riotous with delight were they assembled within Rupert's quarters. They had that day received the welcome intelligence, and were in spirit for unrestrained rejoicing. Ever since Marston Moor the King's cause had been suffering reverses ; once more the tide seemed turning in its favour.

But nothing of war occupied their thoughts now ;

the victory on the Wye had been talked over, the victors toasted, and the subject dismissed for one always uppermost at a Cavalier carousal.

Several songs had been already sung, but that of Lunsford—so indecent that only the chorus can be here given—tickled the fancies of all, and an *encore* was demanded. A demand with which the festive Lunsford readily complied, and the ribald refrain once more received uproarious plaudits.

“Now, gentlemen!” said the host, on silence being restored, “fill again! We’ve but toasted the wenches in a general way. I’m going to propose one in particular, whom you’ll all be eager to honour. A fascinating damsel, who, if I’m not mistaken, Cousin Charles, has put a spell upon your young heart.”

“Ha-ha!” smirked the precocious reprobate, in a semi-protesting way. “You *are* mistaken, coz. None of womankind can do that.”

“Ah! if your Royal Highness has escaped her

witcheries, you're one of the rare exceptions. *Mein Gott!* she has turned the heads of more than half my young officers, and commands them as much as I do myself. Well, she's worthy of obedience, if beauty has the right to rule, and we Cavaliers cannot deny it that. So let us drink to her!"

By this all had replenished their cups, and were waiting to hear the name of her whose charms were so extolled by their princely host. A good many could guess; and more than one listened to what he had been saying with a feeling of unpleasantness. For he but spoke the truth about the fascinations of a certain lady, and more than one present had felt their spell to the surrender of hearts. Not from this came their pain, however, but from whisperings that Rupert himself had set covetous eyes on the lady in question, and well knew they what that meant—a thing fatal to their own aspirations. Where the sun deigns to shine the satellite stars have to suffer eclipse.

And just as these jealous subordinates anticipated, the damsel about to be toasted was Mademoiselle Lalande.

“Clarisse Lalande!” at length called out the Prince, adding—“To the bottom of your cups, gentlemen!”

And to the bottom of their cups drank they, honouring the toast with a cheer, in which might be detected some tone of irony.

The usual brief interval of silence, as lull in the midst of storm, was succeeded by a buzz of conversation, not about any common or general subject, but carried on by separate groups, and in dialogue between individuals.

Into this last had entered two gentlemen, who sate near the head of the table; one in civilian garb, the other wearing the uniform of a cavalry officer. Both were men of middle age, the officer somewhat the older; while a certain gravity of aspect distinguished him from the gay roysterers

around. But for the insignia on his dress, he would have looked more like Parliamentarian than Royalist.

The demeanour of the civilian was also of the sober kind, and marked by an air of distinction which proclaimed him a somebody of superior rank.

"'Tis no more than the truth," he said, turning to the officer, after the toast had been disposed of. "The Creole *is* a fascinating creature. Don't you think so, Major Grenville?"

"I do, my Lord. Her fascination is admitted by all. But, perhaps, some of it is due to her rather free manners. With a little more modesty she might not appear so attractive—certainly would not to most of the present company."

"Ah! true, There's something in that."

"A good deal, my Lord; despite the old adage. For modesty is a quality that does *not* adorn Mademoiselle Lalande. A pity, too! The want of it may ruin her reputation, if it hasn't done that already."

"What a moralist you are, Major! Your ideas have a strong taint of Puritanism. I hope you're not going to turn your back on us gay Cavaliers. Ha-ha-ha!"

The laugh told his Lordship to be in jest. He knew Major Grenville to be a devoted adherent of the King, else he would not have bantered him.

"But," he continued, reverting to the topic with which they started, "morals apart, I've never seen a thing to give one such an idea of woman's power as she does—in that curious Indian dance. 'Tis a wonderful picture, or rather embodiment, of feminine voluptuousness."

"All that I admit," returned the Major. "But for true womanly grace—ay, *abandon*, but of a very different kind—you should see a cousin she has, a real English girl, or, to speak more correctly, Welsh."

"All the same. But who is the cousin so highly endowed?"

"A Miss Powell, the daughter of a wealthy gentleman, who, I'm sorry to say, is not on our side; instead, one of our bitterest enemies."

"Might you mean Master Ambrose Powell, of Hollymead House, up in the Forest of Dean?"

"The same. Your Lordship seems to know him?"

"Certainly I do, or did; for it's several years since I've seen him. But he had two daughters then, Sabrina and Vaga. One is not likely to forget the names. Are not both still living?"

"Oh yes."

"The elder, Sabrina, was nearly grown up when I saw them last, the other but a slip; but both promised to be great beauties."

"If your Lordship saw them now, you'd say the promise has been kept. They are that, beyond cavil or question."

"But from what you've said, I take it you regard one of them as superior to the other.

Which, may I ask ? At a guess I'd say Sabrina. As a girl I liked her looks best ; came near liking them too well. Ha-ha ! Have I guessed correctly ? ”

“The reverse, my Lord ; that is, according to my ideas of beauty.”

“Then you award the palm to Vaga ? ”

“Decidedly.”

“Well, Major, I won't question your judgment, as I can't till I've seen the sisters again. No doubt they will be much changed since I had the pleasure of last meeting them. But they should now be of an age to get married ; Sabrina certainly. Is there no talk of that ? ”

“There is, my Lord.”

“Regarding which ? ”

“Regarding both.”

“Ah ! And who the respective favourites ? ”

“Say respective *financés*, your Lordship. They're engaged. So report has it.”

"And who are to be the Benedicts? Who is Mistress Sabrina to make happy?"

"Sir Richard Walwyn, 'tis said."

"Dick Walwyn, indeed! An old classmate of mine at Oxford. Well, she might do worse. And the little yellow-haired sprout? She was a bright blonde, I remember, with wonderful tresses, like a Danæ's shower. Who's to be the possessor of all that auriferous wealth?"

"One of the Trevors."

"There's one of them on the Prince's staff, I understand. Is it he?"

"No; a cousin—son of Sir William of Abergavenny."

"What! the young stripling who used to be at Court—one of the gentlemen ushers?"

"The same, my Lord."

"Quite an Adonis he; so the Queen thought, 'twas said. Mistress Vaga must have all the fascinations you credit her with to have made

conquest of him. But he's not with the King now?"

"No; nor on the King's side neither. He turned coat, and took service under the Parliament, in Walwyn's troop of Horse. 'Tis supposed the Danæ's shower your lordship speaks of had a good deal to do with his conversion."

"Very likely that. Cupid's a powerful proselytiser. Well, I should like to see the Powell girls again; their father too, for old friendship's sake. By the way, where are they?"

"I am not well informed about their present whereabouts. Some twelve months ago they were here in Bristol, staying at Montserrat House with Madame, his sister. When we took the place, Master Ambrose thought it wise to move away from it, for reasons easily understood. He went hence to Gloucester, where, I believe, he has been residing ever since—up till within the last few days. Likely they're at Hollymead just

now ; at least I heard of Powell having returned thither, thinking he would be safe with Monmouth in Massey's hands. Since it isn't any longer, he may move back to Gloucester ; and the sooner the better, I should say. He has sadly compromised himself by acting on one of the Parliament's Committees ; and some of ours will show him but slight consideration."

"Indeed, I should be sorry if any serious misfortune befell him, or his. An odd sort of man with mistaken views politically ; still a man of sterling good qualities. I hope, Major, he may not be among the many victims this unnatural war is claiming all over the land."

"I echo that hope, my Lord."

And with these humane sentiments their dialogue came to a close, so far as that subject was concerned.

Two men had been listening to it with eager ears—Prince Rupert and Colonel Lunsford, who

sate by his side. Amidst the clinking of goblets, and the jarring din of many voices, they could not hear it all ; still enough to make out its general purport.

They seemed especially interested when the Major spoke of the Powells having returned to Hollymead. It was news to them ; glad news for a certain reason. Often since that morning after the surrender of Bristol had the princely voluptuary given thought to the "bit of saucy sweetness, with cheeks all roses," he had seen passing out of its gates for Gloucester. Just as at first sight her sister had caught the fancy of the brutal Lunsford, so had she caught his ; and the impression still remained, despite a succession of *amours* and love escapades, with high and low, since.

In more than one of his marauds through the Forest of Dean, Lunsford along with him, he had paid visit to Hollymead House ; only to find it

untenanted, save by caretakers—the family still in the city of Gloucester. Many the curse hurled he, and his infamous underling, at that same city of Gloucester; where the Cavalier who had not cursed it?

Overjoyed, then, were the two by what had just reached their ears, the Prince interrogating in undertone,—

“You hear that, Lunsford?”

“I do, your Highness.”

“*Gott sei dank!* Just what we’ve been wishing and waiting for. We may now visit Hollymead, with fair hope of the sweet *fräuleins* being there to receive us. Then, *mein* Colonel, then — *nous verrons!*”

After delivering himself in this polyglot fashion, he caught hold of his goblet, and clinking it against that of Lunsford, said in a confidential whisper,—

“We drink to our success, Sir Thomas!”

There had been a third listener to the dialogue between Major Grenville and the nobleman, who also overheard the words spoken by Rupert to the new-made knight. But, instead of gladdening, the first gave him pain; which the last intensified to very bitterness. His name made known, the reason will be divined. For it was Reginald Trevor.

CHAPTER LII.

AT HOME AGAIN.

THERE was rejoicing at Ruardean. After two years of forced absence, the master of Hollymead had returned to his ancestral home, and the faces of his beautiful daughters once more gladdened the eyes of the villagers.

Out of the world's way as was this quaint little place, it too had suffered the severities of the war. More than one visit had been paid to it by patrols and scouting parties of the Royalist soldiery ; which meant very much the same as if the visitors had been very bandits. They made free with everything they could lay hands on worth the trouble of taking—goods, apparel, furniture, even to the most cherished household goods ; invading

the family sanctuary, and at each re-appearance stripping it cleaner and cleaner.

Ruardean had, indeed, become an impoverished place, as all the rural district around. The "chimney tapestry" had disappeared from the farmer's kitchen, neither fitch nor ham to be seen in it; empty his pigsties, unstocked his pastures; and if a horse remained in his stable it was one no Cavalier would care to bestride. The King's Commissioners of Array had requisitioned all, calling it a purchase, and paying with bits of stamped paper, which the reluctant vendor knew to be worth just nothing. But, *nolens volens*, he must accept it, or take the alternative, sure of being made severe for him.

So afflicted ever since the surrender of Bristol to Rupert, no wonder the Forest people had grown a-weary of the war, and were glad when they heard of Wintour's defeat at Beachley, and soon after of Monmouth being taken by the Parliamentarians.

It seemed earnest of a coming peace; while to the people of the Ruardean district Ambrose Powell once more appearing among them was like the confirmation of it.

Something besides gave them security, for the time at least. A squadron of horse had taken up quarters in their village; not the freebooting Cavaliers, bullying and fleecing them; but soldiers who treated them kindly, paid full price for everything, in short, behaved to them as friends and protectors. For many of them were their friends, their own relatives, the body of horse being that commanded by Colonel Walwyn, with Rob Wilde as its head sergeant.

Alike secure felt the ladies in Hollymead House, safe as within Gloucester. How could it be otherwise, with Sir Richard having his headquarters there and Eustace Trevor under the same roof?

The happy times seemed to have returned; and the sisters, after their long irksome residence in

walled towns, more than ever enjoyed that country life, to which from earliest years they had been accustomed.

And once again went they out hawking, with the same cast of peregrines and the same little merlin. For Van Dorn, living in a sequestered spot, and unaffected by the events of the war, had kept the falcons up to their training.

Once more to the marsh at the base of Ruardean Hill, the party almost identical with that which had repaired thither two years before. And as before rang out the falconer's *hooha-ha-ha-ha!* and shrill whistle, as a heron rose up from the sedge; again a *white* heron, the great egret! Singular coincidence, and strangely gratifying to the fair owner of the peregrines, for she especially wanted an egret. How she watched as it made for upper air, with the falcons doing their best to mount above it; watched with eager, anxious eyes, fearing it might get away. Not that she was cruel, only

just then she so desired to have a *white* heron ; would give anything for one.

She did not need to have a fear. Van Dorn had done his duty by the hawks, and the chased bird had no chance of escaping. Soon its pursuers were seen above it, with spread trains and quivering sails ; then one *stooped, raked*, and rose over again ; while the other stooped to *bind* ; both ere long becoming bound ; when all three birds came fluttering back to earth.

With triumphant "whoop !" the falconer pronounced it a kill ; but this time, seemingly without being told, he plucked out the tail coverts, and handed them to his young mistress. Days before, however, Van Dorn had received injunctions to procure such if possible. There was a hat that wanted a plume.

"To replace that you lost, dear Eustace," she said, passing them over to him.

"'Tis so good of you to think of it, darling !"

How different their mode of addressing one another from the time when they were last upon that spot! No painstaking coyness now; but heart knowing heart, troth plighted, and loves mutually reliant.

"I shall take better care of this one," he added, adjusting the feathers into a *panache*. "Never man sadder than I when the other was taken from me. For I feared it would be the loss of what I far more valued."

"Your life. Ah! so feared I when I heard you were wounded——"

"No, not my life," he said, interrupting. "Something besides."

"What besides?"

"Your love, Vaga; at least your esteem."

"Eustace! How could you think that?"

"From having lost my own, along with my character as a soldier. To be taken as in a trap."

“Never that, dearest! All knew there was treason. If you were taken so might a lion, with such numbers against you. And how you delivered yourself!”

She had learnt all the particulars of his escape—a deed of daring to be proud of. And proud was she of it.

“Do you know, Eustace,” she continued, without waiting his rejoinder, “that you spared me a journey, and perhaps some humiliation?”

“A journey! Whither?”

“To Goodrich Castle first; and it might have been anywhere after.”

“But why?”

“To throw myself at Sir Henry Lingen’s feet, and crave mercy for you.”

“That would have been humiliation indeed, darling. And I’m glad that chance hindered you from it.”

“Chance! No love: your courage did it, and——”

“My horses’s heels, rather say. But for them I should not be here.”

He was upon that horse’s back then; she on a palfrey by his side.

“Noble Saladin!” she exclaimed, drawing closer, and passing her gloved hand caressingly over his arched neck. “Dear, good Saladin! If you but knew how grateful I am!”

Saladin did seem to know, as in soft, gentle neighing he turned his head round to acknowledge the caress.

A fair picture these betrothed lovers formed as they sate in their saddles under the greenwood tree. Some change was there in them since they had been there before. He handsome as ever perhaps handsomer. His cheeks embrowned with two years’ campaigning, his figure braced to a terser, firmer manhood; on Saladin’s back he seemed the personification of a young crusader just returned from the Holy Wars.

She lovelier than of erst, if that were possible. A woman now, her girlhood's beauty had done all Major Grenville said of it, and more. Sager had she grown, made so by the vicissitudes and trials of the time ; and it became her. Not now clapped she her hands, and echoed the falconer's "whoop !" when the hawks struck their quarry down. Instead, took it all quietly ; so different from former days !

But there was another cause now sobering, almost saddening, her, one which affected both. The war was not yet at an end. At any hour, any moment, might come a summons which would again separate them, perchance never more to meet ! In that tranquil sylvan scene they felt as on the deck of a storm-tossed, wreck-threatened ship, in the midst of angry ocean ! Cruel war, to beget such reflections—such fears !

And, alas ! they were realized almost on the instant. Following the old course, the hawking

party had ascended to the summit of the hill to give the merlin its turn. The game of its pursuit, more plentiful, was easily found and flushed, so that soon the courageous creature made a kill—a landrail the quarry.

But ere it could be cast off for a second flight, just as once before, the sport was interrupted by their seeing a horseman on the opposite hill coming down the road from the Wilderness to Drybrook.

He might not have been noticed but for the pace, which was a rapid gallop. This down the steep declivity told of some pressing purpose, while the sun's glitter upon arms and accoutrements proclaimed him a soldier.

More definite was the knowledge got of him through a telescope, which one of the attendants carried. Glancing through it, Sir Richard recognised the uniform of a Parliamentary dragoon—one of Massey's own regiment. Coming that way,

and at such a speed, the man must be a messenger with despatches ; and for whom but himself ?

Separating from his party, and taking Hubert with him, the knight trotted off to the nearest point where the Ruardean road passed over the shoulder of the hill, there halting till the dragoon should come up. Nor had he long to wait. As conjectured, the man was a messenger, bearing a despatch that called for all haste in the delivery, and therefore came galloping up the slope without lessening his pace. He seemed some little disconcerted at seeing two horsemen drawn up on the road before him, but a word from Sir Richard reassured him, as he perceived it was the knight himself.

As the despatch was for Sir Richard, this brought his gallop to an end ; and, drawing up, he handed over the document, simply saying—

“From Governor Massey, Colonel.”

Addressed “Colonel Walwyn,” it read,—

"Gerrard has slipped through out of South Wales, by Worcester, and now *en route* to join the King at Oxford. I've got orders from the Committee to march out and intercept him, if possible at Evesham, or before he can cross the Cotswolds. I shall want every man of my command. So draw off from the Ruardean, for Gloucester, and reinforce its garrison. Start soon as you get this—lose not a moment. Time is pressing.

"E. MASSEY."

When Sir Richard returned to the hawking party his hurried manner, with the serious expression upon his features, admonished Vaga Powell that her presentiment was on the eve of being fulfilled. Sure was she of it on hearing his answer to Sabrina, who had anxiously questioned him on his coming up.

"Yes, dearest! A courier from Massey at Gloucester. I'm commanded to proceed thither in all haste. We must home."

And home went they to Hollymead, hurriedly as once before. But not to stay there; only to leave the ladies within a few minutes in getting ready for the "route." Then back down to Ruardean to order the "Assembly" sounded; soon after "Boots and saddles"; in fine, the "Forward, march!" and before the sun had sunk over the far Hatteral Hills, the sequestered village had resumed its wonted tranquillity, not a soldier to be seen in its streets, nor anywhere round it.

CHAPTER LIII.

AGAIN PRESENTIMENTS.

"DON'T you wish we were back in Gloucester, Sab?"

"Why wish that, Vag?"

"It's so lonely here."

"How you've changed, and in so short a time! While in the city you were all longings for the country and now——"

"Now I long to get back to the city."

"The prosaic city of Gloucester, too!"

"Even so. And am sorry we ever came away from it."

"You've got yourself to blame. Father was all against it, you know, and only yielded to your

solicitations. As you're his favourite he couldn't refuse you."

"But you approved of it yourself, for another reason."

Sabrina had approved of it for another reason thus hinted at. After the taking of Monmouth by the Parliamentarians, Sir Richard Walwyn had orders to keep to the Hereford side of the Forest and guard the approaches in that direction. Hence his having his Horse quartered at Ruardean, and hence the desire of the sisters to be back at Hollymead House. Now that he was gone to Gloucester—so unexpectedly summoned thither—all was different, and to Vaga the country life she had so enthusiastically praised seemed no longer delightful.

"Well, Vag, we're here now, and must make the best of it. Though I confess to feeling it a little lonely myself. I wish father had taken Richard's advice."

At his hurried departure Colonel Walwyn had

counselled their leaving Hollymead, and going back to reside at Gloucester, if not at once, soon as the removal could be conveniently made. The knight, without wishing unnecessarily to alarm them, had yet some apprehensions about their safety in that remote place. But they were not shared in by his intended father-in-law, who, although not absolutely rejecting the advice, still delayed following it. So secure felt he that, even on the very day when Sabrina was speaking of it, he had himself gone to Gloucester, on Committee business, and left his daughters at Hollymead alone.

Vaga echoed her sister's wish, then added,—

“It may be worse than lonely. Don't you think there's some danger?”

“Oh, no! What danger?”

“Why, from the enemy—the King's people.”

“There are none nearer than Bristol and Hereford.”

"You forget Goodrich Castle?"

"No, I don't. But with Monmouth in the hands of our soldiers the Goodrich garrison will have enough to do taking care of itself, without troubling us."

Monmouth had not yet been retaken by the Royalists; at least no word of that had reached Hollymead House.

"Besides," she continued. "Sir Henry Lingen would not likely molest us. You remember before the war he was very much father's friend, and——"

"And before he was married very much yours," interpolated the younger sister, with a glance of peculiar significance. "I remember that too. For the which reason he might be the very man to molest us. There's such a thing as spitefulness, and he could scarce be blamed for feeling it a little."

"T'sh, Vaga! Don't say such silly things. There never was aught between Sir Henry and

myself, nor any reason for his being spiteful now. We have nothing to apprehend from that quarter."

"Still we may from some other."

"What other are you thinking of?"

"Not any in particular. Only a vague sense of somebody—a foreboding—as when we were out hawking, just before that courier arrived. I had the same feeling then, and it came true."

"Admitting it did, what evil came of it? None; only an ordinary event, Richard and Eustace being separated from us. So long as the war lasts we must expect that, and be patiently resigned to it."

Though sager grown, Vaga was still not equal to the strain of any prolonged resignation. Of a subtle, nervous nature, she was easily affected by signs and omens, felt presentiments and had belief in them. One was upon her at this same moment, and in an instant after she saw that which seemed likely to justify it.

"Look !" she cried ; "look yonder !"

They were in the withdrawing room, having entered it after eating breakfast, she herself standing at one of the windows, with eyes bent down the long avenue. What had elicited her exclamation was a figure that, having passed inside the park gates, was coming on for the house. A woman, but of man's stature, and by this easily identifiable. For at the first glance Vaga recognised the sister of Cadger Jack.

It was not that which had caused her to exclaim so excitedly. Winny was an almost everyday visitor at the big house, having much business there, and nothing strange would be thought of her coming to it at any time. The strangeness was the way in which she was making approach, hurriedly and in long strides—almost at a run !

"What can it mean ?" mechanically interrogated Sabrina, who had joined the other at the window. "So unlike Winifred's usual stately step ! Unlike

her manner too—she seems greatly excited. Something amiss, I fear.”

“Oh, sister! I’m sure of it. Just what I’ve been thinking and saying. She has news for us, and sad news—you’ll see.”

“I trust not. Stay! this is Monmouth market day, possibly she has been to the market and heard something there. In that case it’s not likely to affect us much, all we care for being on the other side of the Forest. And yet the cadgers could scarce have been to the market and back again already? ’Tis too early. But we shall soon know.”

By this the cadgeress was pushing open the wicket-gate of the *haw-haw*, and, now near, they could read the expression upon her features, which showed full of concern.

Though the month of October, the morning was warm, and the window in which they stood, a casement, had been thrown open. Stepping

into a little balcony outside, and leaning over the rail, Sabrina called out interrogatively—

“You have some news for us, Win?”

“’Deed yes, my lady. That hae I, an’ sorry be’s I to say’t.”

“Bad news, then?” exclaimed both sisters in a breath, their hearts audibly beating.

“Is it anything from Gloucester?” gasped out the elder one, the other mentally echoing the question.

“No, my ladies. It be all ’bout Monnerth.”

This some little relieved them, and more tranquilly they waited to hear what the news was.

“Them be’s bad, as ye ha’ guessed,” continued the cadgeress. “Him have been took by the Cavaliers.”

“Him! Who?” simultaneously exclaimed the sisters, again greatly excited.

“Monnerth, mistresses; I sayed Monnerth, didn’t I?”

"Oh! yes, yes." They were too glad to give assent, without noticing her ungrammatical provincialism. "Monmouth taken by the Cavaliers, you say?"

"Yes, my ladies. They's be back into it, an' ha' shut up the Parliamentaries in prison—all as didn't get away."

"Where have you heard this, Win? You haven't been to Monmouth yourself, have you?"

"No, Mistress Sabrina. Only partways. Jack an' me started for the market; but fores crossin' the ferry at Goodrich us heerd as how the Sheriff wor down at Monnerth, an' had helped them o' Ragland to capter the town. Takin' the hint, us turned back an' hurried home, fast as ever we could; an' I han't lost a minnit in comin' to tell ye."

"'Twas thoughtful of you, Winifred," said Sabrina. "And we give you thanks. Now go round to the cook and have something to eat. But stay!

I'm forgetting. You haven't told us what time it happened—I mean the taking of Monmouth. You heard that, didn't you ?”

“Yes, mistress. Night afore last, or early yester morn. Whens day broke the King's flag be seen over the Castle, an' there wor great rejoicins in the town. So tolt we the ferryman o' Goodrich.”

“What should we do ?” inquired Vaga, after the cadgeress had parted company with them, retiring to the kitchen.

“What can we do ? Nothing, till father comes home. As they must have had the intelligence at Gloucester, yesterday evening at latest, we may look for him soon. I suppose we must give up all thought of hawking to-day ? Some one had better go to Van Dorn's lodge, and tell him not to come.”

“Too late ! There he is now.”

The falconer was seen approaching by a side path, with an attendant who carried the hawks

on a *cadge*, a couple of dogs following. At the same instant saddled horses, in the charge of grooms, were being brought round from the rear of the house. All this had been ordered beforehand, the ladies having sate down to breakfast costumed and equipped for the sport of falconry.

"Shall we send them back?" queried Sabrina, irresolutely.

"Why should we?"

Vaga was passionately fond of hawking; and, now that she knew the worst of that foreboding late felt, was something of herself again. The taking of Monmouth was but one of the many incidents of the war; no misfortune had happened to any in whom they had special concern.

"I suppose we'll have to leave Hollymead now," she added, "once more to take up our abode in cities. In which case it may be long before we have another day with hawks. If we don't go, Van Dorn will be so disappointed."

"If we do, then," rejoined Sabrina, half assentingly, "it mustn't be far—not outside the park."

"Agreed to that. No need for our going out of it. Inside we'll find plenty of things to fly your Mer at. As for my Pers, if better don't turn up, we can whistle them off at a cushat."

So it was settled, and in twenty minutes after they were in their saddles, and away beyond sight of the house, listening to the *hoo-ha-ha-ha-ha*, the whistle and the whoop.

CHAPTER LIV.

A GLITTERING COHORT.

IT was getting late in the afternoon when a party of horsemen, numbering about two hundred, commenced the ascent of Cat's Hill, going in the direction of Ruardean.

Soldiers they were, in scarlet doublets, elaborately laced ; their standard flag, with the Royal arms in its field, and a crown upon the peak of its staff, proclaiming them in the service of the king.

That it was no common cavalry troop could be told by other distinctive symbols. Beside the three or four subalterns in their places along the line, half a score other officers were at its head ; in gorgeous uniforms, and with hats grandly

plumed, as on the personal staff of a general. And such were they ; the rank and file rearward being his escort. No ordinary general either, but the commander-in-chief of the King's armies—Prince Rupert himself.

His own garb in splendour outshone all ; a blaze of jewels and gold, from the *aigrette* in his hat to the spurs upon his heels—costume more befitting court than camp.

But he was not now on any war expedition ; instead, on the way to seek conquest of other kind than by the sword.

It was the day succeeding that night of revelry at his quarters in Bristol ; and the words there exchanged between him and Colonel Lunsford will explain his presence on the Cat's Hill, with face turned towards Ruardean. For in that direction also lay Hollymead House whither he was proceeding.

Quick work and a rapid ride had he made of

it; evincing the strong passion of fancy with which the "bit of saucy sweetness" had inspired him.

Lunsford was with him, by his side; the two some lengths in the lead, and apart from the others, conversing as they rode on.

"You think, *mein* Colonel," said the Prince, interrogatively, "we shall find the *fräuleins* at home this time!"

"Pretty sure of it, your Highness. Since the Goodrich ferryman heard of their being at Hollymead yesterday, it's scarcely probable they can have taken departure since."

"But the news from Monmouth will have reached them. How about that?"

"It will affect them somewhat, I dare say. Still, Master Powell is not a man to be easily frightened. As your Highness will be aware, Ruardean is not under the Monmouth Commissioners. Sir John Wintour on the Gloucester side, is the one Powell

has most reason to apprehend a visit from. And as he will know of Sir John's being held in check by Massey, he won't be much alarmed, just yet. Still, no doubt, he'll be for moving back again to Gloucester; though not in such hot haste, but that your Highness will have an opportunity of holding speech with him."

"*Gott!* Sir Thomas; that should be the reverse of pleasant, from what you've told me about the old Roundhead's tongue. He may give it me as he did yourself."

"No fear of that, your Highness."

"Why not, pray?"

"The circumstances are quite different. He had backings about him then—these ugly forest fellows, five to our one. Besides a Royal Prince—Puritan though he be—he'll have respect for that. But what matters it about his prating? Your Highness intends laying him by the heels!"

"That will depend on circumstances. We must

try the *suaviter* before the *fortiter*. If fair words fail, then—the extremities.”

“Our present visit to the Master of Hollymead is to be of a friendly character then? Is that your Highness’s intention!”

“Ceremoniously so; all the politeness to be observed by every one of our escort. You will see to that, Colonel?”

“It shall be seen to. But does your Highness propose taking them all to the house? It might be convenient to leave some at the village, to wait your coming back.”

“*Nein, nein!*” impatiently exclaimed the Prince.
“All go on with me.”

Astute schemer as was Lunsford himself, he was not aware of certain motives actuating his master. Anything but an Adonis was the son of the Elector Palatinate. Yet such he dreamed himself, with a confidence in his power of fascinating the fair sex almost illimitable. The type and boast

of Cavalierism, he wielded sway uncontrolled wherever he went, or the Royal cause was triumphant; women, as men, either willingly submitting to his caprices, or not daring to oppose them. Many a conquest had he made over weak creatures consenting. For the achievement of such he well knew the advantage of stately show and regal surroundings, nowhere more effective than in the country he was defiling with his presence. Even at this day as then, where the proverbial indemnity for the wrong-doing of kings is extended to princes and princelets, their social backslidings gaining them credit, rather than blame, under the facetious title, geniality.

No man better than Rupert knew woman's weakness in this regard. Hence the shining retinue he had summoned to attend him in this ride through the Forest of Dean—one of the pleasure excursions he was accustomed to make under the plea of a military reconnaissance. For, although

the future pirate of the West Indian seas was quite indifferent to English public opinion, there were reasons then for him not too openly outraging it. By his defeats and failures he had lost the countenance of the court, and intrigue was there busy against him.

"In that case, your Highness," rejoined Lunsford, "there's no necessity for our going through the village. A path leads through the woods by which it can be avoided."

"Is it a roundabout?"

"Not much, if any. It comes back into this again, near Hollymead Park gates. If we pass through the village your Highness's escort will gain a large accession of strength, which may not be agreeable to you."

"Gott, yes! Something in that, Sir Thomas. Let us take the other way, then. Where does it branch off?"

"There, your Highness"; and he pointed to the

embouchure of a wood road some paces ahead on the right.

Without further speech they turned into it, and rode on beneath the shadow of trees, whose branches, arcading over, hindered sight of the sun. For, though October, these were still in full foliage, the leaves falling late in the Forest of Dean. But green no more; save those of the yew, holly, and frost-defying bramble, with the mistletoe and its pearl-like pellucid berries. All others showed hues and tints varied, and almost as vivid as those of the tropical forests so much extolled by travellers.

A winding path it was, by reason of the steep incline; and, as in silence, the glittering cohort, forced into single file by its narrowness, slowly followed the sinuosities upward, it might have been likened to a gigantic serpent in crawl towards unsuspecting prey.

This similitude in more ways than one; for at

the head of that glancing line there were serpents, though in human shape, making approach to what they intended as victims.

CHAPTER LV.

HAWKING AT HOME.

THE peregrines had killed cushat and partridge, the merlin its half score of buntings and turtle doves, and the ladies having had a surfeit of sport, were about setting faces homeward. Not that it was late—still wanting two hours of sunset—but the news from Monmouth had disquieted them, and they were feeling anxious about their father's return. He might be back already, and if so, would wonder at their being away from the house.

Van Dorn had called off the dogs, rehooded the hawks, and made all ready for the start home, when game, of a sort that day unseen by them, came unexpectedly in view. A heron on its way

across the Forest from the Severn to the Wye, flying low as it passed over the park.

Hapless heron! A temptation no falconer could resist; and at leave, or rather command, from the younger of his mistresses, off went hoods again, leashes were let loose, and once more away flew the noble falcons, mounting spirally upward.

Just at that moment the gates of the park were thrown open to admit Prince Rupert and his retinue. With Lunsford still by his side, the two had already looked through the rails and up the avenue. To see there what gave them satisfaction; the house with windows no longer shuttered, smoke ascending from several of the chimneys, in short every sign of occupation.

"The family here, as anticipated. Your Highness will not be disappointed this time."

"Ah, *wohl*. I was beginning to think the lady of the golden locks an *ignis fatuus*—never to be caught."

"There will be an opportunity of catching her now ; and keeping her, if your Highness so desire."

"You would counsel making the *fräuleins* our prisoners then ? Is that what you mean, *mein* Colonel ? "

"Their father at least should be made so. There's every reason and right for it. He your prisoner, taken back with you to Bristol, 'tis but natural his daughters should accompany him, and share his captivity. If they have the true filial affection they'll be but too willing to do that. Does your Highness comprehend ? "

"Quite !" was the laconic response.

The suggestion, cruel and ruffianly, did not jar on Rupert's ears ; rather was it in harmony with his wishes, and half-formed designs. He was proceeding to ponder upon it, having ridden through the gate, when a cry, peculiarly intoned, came from a remote corner of the park, quick followed by a shrill whistle.

The air was still, and sounds could be heard from afar; these being clearly distinguishable.

"Ho-ho!" exclaimed the Prince, reining his horse to a stand. "Sport going on here! Somebody out hawking."

The *hoohq-ha-ha* was familiar to him.

"Yes," said Lunsford. "That was a falconer's cry—the cast off."

"Who might it be, Sir Thomas?"

"Impossible to say, Prince. The party must be behind that spinney of Scotch firs. But see! yonder the hawks! Peregrines in chase of a heron."

"By'r Lady, yes! A splendid caste. Trained to perfection. How handsomely they mount up! Over him now! That stoop and rake, superb. A fig for your chances, master lance-beak. Hey! One of them bound! Now the other. Now down, down. *Wunderschon!*"

Absorbed in watching the actual conflict, all eyes directed upward, Rupert and his following for a

time neither saw nor thought of anything else. No more did they of the hawking party, who, led by the chase, had pushed on through the spinney of firs to be forward at the kill. Only when the bound bird was writhing to free itself, in its last struggles lowering down to earth, did the two parties catch sight of one another. Not so near yet, a wide stretch of the park being between; but near enough for a mutual making out of what they were.

“Soldiers!” exclaimed they of the hawking party.

“Wenches!” the word that came from the lips of the Cavaliers.

“We’re in luck, Prince,” said Lunsford. “You see yonder?”

“Two ladies; yes. Are they the birds we’re in search of, think you?”

“Sure of it, your Highness.”

“Playing with other birds. Ha-ha! Well; suppose we join them at their play?”

"As your Highness commands."

"Do you know them, Sir Thomas—I mean personally?"

"I've never been introduced, Prince; but Captain Trevor——"

"Ah! I remember your saying something about his—— Trevor!" he called back to an officer of his suite, "come hither!"

Reginald Trevor it was; who, parting from his place in the line, rode up, respectfully saluting.

"If I'm not mistaken, sir," said the Prince, "you have acquaintance with the ladies we see yonder? Presumably the daughters of Master Ambrose Powell."

"If it be they, your Highness, I once had. But it's been dropped long ago."

"What! A quarrel?"

"No, Prince," answered the young officer, somewhat hesitatingly. "Not exactly that."

"Only a little coolness, then. Well, perhaps I

may be the means of restoring friendly relations. But first I want you to perform the ceremonial of introduction. I hope you haven't so far offended the damsels as to render you ineligible?"

Trevor stammered out a negative, at the same time announcing his readiness to comply with the Prince's wish. He could not help himself, knowing it was more a command than request.

"Come along, then! Let us on to them. You, Colonel, keep the escort at halt here, till I ascertain whether we can have a night's lodging at Hollymead House. That is," he added in a jocular way, "whether we'll be made welcome to it."

Saying which, he gave his Arab a touch of the spur, and started off at a canter over the green sward, direct for the hawking-party.

Of course Reginald Trevor went along with him; though with a reluctance which had only yielded to authority not to be gainsaid. Despite her withering words spoken at their last interview, he

still loved Vaga Powell himself—hoping against hope—still had respect for her; and to introduce Prince Rupert was like being a party to the accomplishment of her ruin.

“Humph!” grumbled the ex-Lieutenant of the Tower as he looked after them, some little chagrined at being left behind; “High Mightiness thinks he’s going to have it his own way with yellow hair. He won’t though; unless he do as I’ve counselled him. But ’twill come to that—must, before we go back to Bristol—and I shall carry thither my share of the sweet spoils.”

CHAPTER LVI.

AN INTRODUCTION IN THE SADDLE.

"WHO can they be? Not soldiers of the Parliament?"

"No; too much gaud and glitter for that."

"Sir Henry Lingen's!"

"Scarcely either. I heard Richard say Sir Henry's men carry lances. These have none. More probably they're from Monmouth, or rather Raglan. The old Marquis of Worcester's greatly given to display; and his son, Lord Herbert. The shining peacock at their head is likely Herbert himself. They are Royalists, anyhow; that's certain."

The dialogue was between the sisters, commenced as they caught sight of the scarlet-

coated horsemen, who had entered within their park. Hurriedly they talked, and in tone telling of agitation. For it was a spectacle to cause them alarm; King's soldiers coming to Hollymead could mean no good, but all the opposite. Just the visitors foreshadowed by Vaga's fears; her presentiment fulfilled after all!

"What can they be wanting, I wonder?" she queried in a half mechanical way. "Nothing with us, I hope?"

"Not likely with us; but father. We were wishing him at home. How fortunate he isn't!"

"But he may come at any time?"

"Indeed, yes. What's to be done?"

The elder sister seemed perplexed. Only for a short while; then a thought came to her aid; and half turning to the groom who attended them, she said,—

"Rees! Ride back through the firs; gently, and as if looking for something left behind.

When on the other side go as fast as ever you can ; out through the back gate. First round to Ruarden, to the cadger's cottage. Tell Winny to come up to the house in all haste. Then gallop along the Gloucester road, and, if you meet your master, turn him back. You understand ? ”

Rees was a quick-witted Welshman, and did understand. Said so ; and at once started to execute the order ; riding slowly off towards the spinney, in zigzags, with body bent and eyes searching over the ground. Once under cover of the trees, however, he straightened himself in the saddle, and was soon outside the inclosure.

The despatching him had been but the work of a few seconds, and he was gone before any movement had been made by the soldiers, who were still halted at the gate.

“What have they stopped for ? ” again wondered Vaga. “Surely they intend going on to the house ? ”

"'Tis we who have stopped them. Their faces are turned this way—they see us!"

"Ah, yes! And two have separated from the rest—are coming towards us! What ought we to do?"

"We may as well await them here; 'twould be impossible to shun them now."

"How should we receive them?"

"Why, civilly of course. We've no alternative but be civil to them. If it be the Lord Herbert we need not fear any special rudeness. Although they are Papists, the Raglan people have never yet——"

"It's not the Lord Herbert!" interrupted Vaga, of keener sight; her eye more occupied with the two making approach.

"How know you it's not?" demanded her sister, in some wonder. "You never saw him, did you?"

"No; but I've seen the one we've been taking

for him—the shining peacock, as you call him. So have you.”

“Who is he, then?”

“Prince Rupert!”

“So it is, indeed! And the other——”

“Reginald Trevor!”

By this the two horsemen were so near, there was no opportunity for the sisters to exchange further speech, save in undertone; Sabrina, as a last word of caution, whispering,—

“We are helpless, and must play a part. I’ve thought of it; will tell you when we’re alone. So be more than civil; very polite.”

“I will try.”

Rupert, a little in the advance, was now up; and suddenly checked his charger to a halt, in such wise as to present the attitude of Mercury just alighted on a “heaven-kissing hill.”

“Fair ladies!” he said. “I have not the pleasure of knowing you. But this gentleman, who

has, if you object not, will do me the honour of an introduction."

"His Royal Highness, Prince Rupert," announced Trevor, after saluting on his own account, somewhat awkwardly.

The "fair ladies" acknowledged the introduction with a bow; even smilingly, which was more than might have been expected. They said nothing, however, leaving the Prince to direct the course of conversation.

Well pleased with his reception he went on,—

"Apologies are owing for the interruption of your sport. I fear we've done that?"

"No, your Highness," said Sabrina. "We had finished for the day."

"Egad! A good finish too. I myself witnessed the kill, and never saw handsomer. Your peregrines are noble birds, and well trained to their work. Ah! you have a merlin, too. Pretty creature!"

By chance the merlin was perched upon the neck of Vaga's palfrey; and, while speaking, the Prince had drawn close up, as if to get a nearer view of it. But his eyes were on the girl's face instead, and the "pretty creature" seemed an apostrophe to her rather than the bird. For it was spoken with peculiar emphasis, and in a subdued tone, as if he did not desire her sister to hear it. Nor did she, having become engaged in conversation with Captain Trevor, some distance apart.

"She's very clever," rejoined Vaga, referring to the merlin, and without appearing to notice the gaze directed upon her, "can kill everything she's cast off at."

"Ah!" sighed the Prince. "Fatal to all the larks and buntings, just as the eyes of her mistress must be to all men."

She looked at him with a puzzled expression. What a strange remark to make about her sister,

whom he could never have seen, save that once as they passed him going out of Bristol! But she understood it, on his adding,—

“The little beauty is yours, I take it?”

“No, your Highness,” she answered, without making any allusion to the implied compliment, though its *braverie* jarred upon her ear. “The merlin belongs to my sister. The peregrines are mine.”

“Happy peregrines!” he exclaimed, pretending to apostrophise the two great falcons, that, now hooded, had been returned to their kedge. “How I should like to be one of you! Ay; would consent to be held in leash for life, could I but hope for caresses, such as you receive from the hands of your beautiful mistress. Ah! that must be sweet!”

There could be no mistaking the character of speech like this, rude even to impertinence. It brought the red into the young girl’s cheeks, and

she would have angrily resented it, but was restrained by the caution late received from her sister. Still, to let it pass unnoticed was out of the question, and would likely lead to her being yet further insulted. Making an effort to curb her kindling indignation, she rejoined, calmly as she could,—

“Such language may befit the fine Court ladies, with whom your Highness is accustomed to hold conversation. We simple country girls are not used to it.”

Regardless of modest manners, even of common decency, as was this German Prince, he felt the rebuke, and quailed under it. For the glance of quiet scorn that went with the words told him he was putting on airs, and paying compliments to no purpose. In that quarter all would be thrown away.

With a light laugh he endeavoured to conceal his discomfiture, saying apologetically,—

“Oh! mistress, you must pardon the free speech of a Cavalier. Our tongues, as our swords, often fly out without reflection. Be assured I meant not to offend—far from it.”

Apology was a bitter pill for Prince Rupert to swallow; but he gulped it down with a better grace, confident of having the “bit of saucy sweetness” in his power. If he failed to make conquest of her, there was another way to fall back upon; that to which his low familiar, Lunsford, had been all along counselling him.

The little *désagrément* brought their *tête-à-tête* to an end, the Prince not caring to continue it. It could be resumed at a more favourable opportunity, which he meant to find before leaving Hollymead. Seeming suddenly to recollect himself, he said, in voice loud enough to be heard by the elder sister, as he intended it,—

“But, ladies! I’ve only half apologised for our intrusion, and trust you will pardon it, when

you hear my excuses. I was on the way to visit your worthy father, with whom I have some business. When hearing the *hooha-ha!* — ardent falconer as I am—I couldn't resist coming across to learn the result. Permit me to take leave of you, with thanks for your gracious reception. Unless, indeed, you do me the further honour of letting me escort you to the house. If I dared make so free, I would even ask the favour of being introduced by you to your father, with whom I regret not having personal acquaintance."

"Our father is not at home," said Sabrina speaking for both.

"Indeed!" he exclaimed, looking half-disappointed, half-pleased. "That's unfortunate. But I suppose you expect him soon?"

"We cannot tell what time he may return, your Highness."

"Ah! he's gone upon a journey, then. May I

ask whither? You'll pardon the inquiry, in view of my business with him?"

"To Gloucester," she answered, without hesitation, too glad to have the questioner think that he inquired about was in that safe city.

"His absence is disappointing," said the Prince—half in soliloquy, and half addressing himself to Captain Trevor. "It will necessitate our staying here for the night." This loud enough for the ladies to hear. "I regret that," he pursued, again turning to them, "not on my own account, but because the quartering of my escort at Hollymead cannot be over agreeable to you. However, I can promise best behaviour on their part; and should your servants have any rudeness to complain of it shall be punished with all severity."

This self-invitation to the hospitality of Hollymead House, however vexatious to the daughters of its absent owner, did not at all surprise them. They had been expecting it as the up-

shot; for, despite his fine phrases of apology—all pretence—the Prince's bearing and manner told them how much he felt himself their master.

Withal, they were not dismayed, Sabrina making calm rejoinder, with some formal words, that Hollymead would be too much honoured by his presence. Then in a whisper to Vaga, as they drew side by side to ride home,—

“Keep up courage, Vag. Above all keep your temper. Everything may depend on that. We're among wolves, that may tear us if angered.”

“Go back, Captain!” called the Prince to Trevor. “Give my commands to Colonel Lunsford, and tell him to bring the escort on to the house.”

“Lunsford along with them!” ejaculated Sabrina, in undertone to her sister. “That makes my words good. We *are* among wolves.”

The evil repute of this man justified her speech. It had been spreading day by day, till

his name was now become a synonym of inhumanity—a bogie to stop the crying of the babes in the cradle.

CHAPTER LVII.

A CRIME IN CONTEMPLATION.

STILL self-invited, Rupert accompanied the ladies to the house, and assisted them to dismount with great show of courtesy and respect. The little ruffle with Vaga had determined him not to try on that tack again.

He did not go inside with them, having some directions to give to his suite, seen approaching up the avenue. Besides, it was nearing dinner hour, and they must needs repair to their dressing-rooms.

Left by himself, the Prince seemed all impatience for his escort to come up. He had even shown haste when helping the ladies out of their saddles,

as if wishing to be disembarrassed of them with the least delay. Some new thought, or scheme, had evidently entered his mind; and, recently, or since despatching Trevor with the order to Lunsford, as then he had said nothing about time.

When they were near enough to hear him he called out, making a sign to the officer at their head to hasten them on. This was Lunsford himself, who, perceiving that something was wanted, separated from the cavalcade, spurring his horse to a quick canter. As the haw-haw gate had already been opened, he passed through it without stop or interruption, on to the house.

"Come up—nearer!" said the Prince, speaking low, and in a cautious manner as if he feared being overheard. He was standing in the porch, a little elevated above the ground, and as the other drew alongside, seated in the saddle, their heads were close enough for conversing in whispers.

"What is it, your Highness?" asked Lunsford, wondering at the air of mystery.

"I suppose Trevor has told you the *pater* isn't at home?"

"He has, Prince; but I knew it before."

"Indeed! How learnt you? When?"

"Just after your Highness rode away from us. One of Powell's people, a sort of shepherd, or cowboy, chanced to be coming into the park; and with a little cross-questioning I got out of him, both the fact of his master's absence, and the whereabouts."

"He's at Gloucester."

"Yes, Prince. But the affair of Monmouth will draw him home, soon as he receives news of it. He should have had that long ago; so may be expected here at any moment."

"Just so. But if he get word of our being here before him, he may turn back and give us the go-by. So I want half a dozen files detached, and

sent off along the Gloucester road, under a trusty officer, in all haste. If they meet him, he's to be made prisoner at once."

"It's already done, your Highness."

"What! Has Powell been taken?"

"No, Prince; pardon me. I meant the detachment has been sent to intercept him. I took the liberty of doing that without your orders. There was not time to communicate with your Highness unless at the risk of being too late."

"True, Colonel, true."

"And it would have been too late," he went on to explain in justification of his act. "As your Highness started to join the hawking-party, perhaps you may not have noticed a man separating from it, and riding back through the trees?"

"*Nein*, Colonel. I did not."

"But I did, Prince. He appeared to be one of their attendants—a groom—though in the distance one couldn't be sure what. But from the way he

went off I suspected it had something to do with our being seen. Soon as I learnt the other thing I was sure of it. Besides, shortly after he had passed out of sight behind the firs, I distinctly heard hoof-strokes, as of a horse in full gallop. Putting that and that together it occurred to me he might have gone off to give the very warning your Highness apprehended."

"If such were his intent, he may still?"

"No, Prince; not likely. He won't be in time. Going out by a back gate he'll have to ride the whole round of the park before he can get upon the Drybrook road, which is that for Gloucester. The detachment started only a few minutes—less than five—after; and on the direct route will easily head him off. They have orders to lay him by the heels, and bring him back here; it's to be hoped the other with him."

"*Gott*, Colonel! you've been clever. A capital stroke of strategy. If it fail, I shan't blame you."

“Your Highness’s approval gratifies me. I think we need not fear failure. At all events the messenger, if such he is, will be stopped, and something will be squeezed out of him as to his errand. I gave instructions that a file be sent back with him, soon as taken. So we may expect seeing him ere long. I suppose your Highness designs to quarter here for the night?”

“Any number of nights, Colonel ; if one be not enough for accomplishing my purpose.”

“Half a one will be enough for that, Prince, if you proceed to accomplishing it in the way I would advise you. No timid measures will avail here ; only the bold course, which conquest gives a right to, all over the world.”

Without a blush did the ruffian give utterance to his atrocious counsels ; for he knew they were congenial to him into whose ears he was pouring them.

“Belike, that will be the best way,” rejoined

the Prince, well knowing what was hinted at. "I come to be of your mind, Colonel. But now, return to the escort. Give directions for their going into quarters. See that sentries are set round the house, with out-lying pickets. We cannot be too careful, though Monmouth is in our hands. When you have everything settled, come to me inside. Then we can talk about further action."

Light of heart, Lunsford proceeded to the execution of the orders thus given. By the Prince's manner—and speech, half admitting—he saw that the latter had received a rebuff, and was in the mood for violence, even to outrage. It would be nothing new to him; nor the first time for the ex-Lieutenant of the Tower to be his aid and companion in such a criminal escapade as that they were now contemplating.

Verily were Ambrose Powell's daughters in danger! And a danger neither had conception or suspicion of.

CHAPTER LVIII.

A MESSENGER DESPATCHED.

THE girls had gone upstairs, their maid, Gwenthian attending upon them to dress for dinner, of which something had been said to the Prince when parting with him at the door.

Once inside the dressing-room, however, Sabrina instead of proceeding to change her attire, made direct for an *escritoire*, the flap of which she pulled open. Then seating herself before it, she drew a sheet of paper from its drawer, and commenced writing with nervous haste.

A letter it was of no very great length, and in a few seconds finished. But before folding it up she turned to the maid saying,—

"Gwenth! Go down to the back door, and stay about there till you see cadger Jack's sister. I expect her to come up to the house; and if nothing has hindered she should be here very soon now. When she arrives bring her to me, without losing a moment. Do it all quietly."

Gwenth signified her comprehension of the orders, and was about starting to execute them, when her mistress said "Stay!" Then, after reflecting a moment, added,—

"Go into the kitchen, and tell the cook dinner is not to be served before Winny goes away—that is, if she come. In any case, it's not to be put on the table, till she has further directions about it."

"But must we really dine along with him?" asked Vaga, as the maid passed out of the room. She had commenced making her toilette, and, inattentive to what her sister had been doing, only overheard what she said about the dinner.

"Either that or give offence. I had to speak of dinner—could not help it—and the Prince will expect us to sit at the table."

"I'd rather sit down with Beelzebub. Oh, Sab! you can't conceive what a vile, vulgar man—Prince though he be."

"Yes I can; know it. Richard has told me all about him. But we must bear, and dissemble; do our best to entertain both him and his officers. I think we needn't fear any special rudeness just yet; and if we can keep them to their good behaviour for twelve hours I ask no more."

"Why do you say twelve hours?"

"Read that."

It was the note she had just written; and, soon as the other had run her eyes over it, she added,—

"Now you understand?"

"I do. But how is it to be taken there?"

"By Winny. It's just for that I gave Rees orders to send her up."

"Couldn't Rees have taken it himself? On horseback he would go much faster."

"True, he might, if permitted to start. But he wouldn't be—not the least likelihood of it. If he return to the house—which I hope he won't—they'll not let him leave it again. But Win will do better every way. We can trust her, and for speed she'll get to her journey's end quick as any courier on horseback. She knows all the short cuts and by-ways through the Forest. That will be in her favour to save time—besides safety otherwise. The fear I have is her not being at home. What a pity we didn't know of their coming, when she was with us in the morning!"

"Perhaps not so much," rejoined Vaga, whose subtle ear had caught the sound of footsteps ascending the stairs; two sets of them, as told by the lighter and heavier tread. "That's Win now coming up with Gwenth. I'm almost sure of it."

In a few seconds after both were sure of it, as

the opened door discovered their maid outside on the landing with the cadgeress close behind.

"Oh, Win! we're so glad!" exclaimed the sisters in a breath, as she was ushered into the room.

"Glad o' what, my ladies?" asked the woman with a puzzled look. She did not understand how they could be joyful under the circumstances.

"At your being here," answered Sabrina. "We were afraid you might not be at home, or unable to come to us."

"Well, mistress; I wor at home, an' comed soon's I got your message. But my comin' wor nigh all bein' for nothin'."

"How so?"

"The Cavaliere sodgers warn't for lettin' me in o' the house, nor yet through the back gate. They ha' got sentries all roun'. Besides, the yard be full o' them wi' their horses, an' their impudence too."

"They were impudent to you?"

"'Deed, yes, my ladies. Swored at me, an' said I mauna set foot inside the gate."

"You see what courteous guests we've got, sister?" said Vaga. "The attendants of a Prince! I thought it would end so."

"Me tried to get past they," continued the cadgeress, "by tellin' a bit fib. I sayed us wor the washwoman come for the clothes."

"How clever!" exclaimed Vaga, admiringly.

"Not much o' that, mistress. Anyways it warn't no use. Them wouldn't allow me in after all; if't hadn't been for a young officer, who chanced be near, an' ordered they let me pass. He spoke me kindly too, which wor the strangest thing o' all."

"Why strange?" asked Sabrina.

"On account o' who him wor, my lady."

"Who?"

"Captain Trevor the one's used to come to Hollymead fores the war."

She had no need to particularise which. The sisters knew, and exchanged glances; that of the elder showing a peculiar intelligence.

“Odd o’ he bein’ civil to me,” pursued the woman. “Him must a knowed we well enough, an’ had remembrance o’ what happened on the Cat’s Hill two years ago. I tolt you about it, my ladies.”

“You did,” said Sabrina. “And it does seem a little strange of Captain Trevor not being spiteful if he recognised you, as he must have done. But,” she added, becoming impatient, “no matter for that now. Time is pressing, and we want you to do us a service, Win. You will?”

“Why needs thee ask if us will?”

“Because there’s some danger in it.”

“That be no reason; and don’t speak o’ the danger. Please to say what’s weeshed done, Mistress Sabrina; an’ t shall be did if in the power o’ we to do’t.”

"This then, dear Winny. We want it taken to Gloucester."

She held out what appeared a spill for lighting pipe or candle. It was the note she had just written, folded and doubled-folded till no longer recognisable as a sheet of paper, much less a letter. For all the cadgeress knew it to be such; and not the first of its kind she had received from the same hands, for surreptitious conveyance.

"It shall be tookt theer," she said, in a determined way, "if the Cavalieres don't take't from me on the way. Them won't find it without some searchin', though."

Saying which, she made further reduction in the dimensions of the sheet by double knotting it; then thrust it under the coils of her luxuriant hair, and by a dexterous play of fingers so fixed it that, only undoing the plaits, could it be discovered.

The letter bore no address, nor was name signed to it. Neither inquired the cadgeress to

whom it was to be delivered. Enough that Mistress Sabrina had given it to her, and it was for Gloucester. She knew there was a man there it must be meant for; she herself, for a special reason, being always well posted up as to the whereabouts of Sir Richard Walwyn and his Foresters.

"Thee weesh me to start immediate, I suppose, my lady?"

"At once—soon as you can get off. How long will it take you to get to Gloucester?"

"Well, for usual me an' Jack be's 'bout four hours fra Ruardean. But I once't did the journey myself in a bit less'n three, an' can go t' same again."

"It's now a little after six—only ten minutes," said Sabrina, consulting her three-cornered watch. "Do you think you could get there by nine?"

"Sure o' that; an afores, if us be alive, an' nothin' happen to stop we on the way."

“Oh! I hope there won’t, dear Winny. Time is of such importance; so much depending upon it. Ay, it may be lives.”

She leant forward, and whispered some words into the woman’s ear; either a last pressing injunction, or, it might be, promise of reward for the service to be performed. Whatever it was, on the face of the Forest Amazon there was an expression of ready assent; then a humorous smile, as she made haste to be gone, saying,—

“Now, Gwenthly! gie us the clothes for the wash!”

The maid, as her mistress, looked a little puzzled. But quickly comprehending, all three set to collecting such *lingerie* as they could lay hands on, soon making up a bundle big enough to represent a week’s consignment for the laundry.

Which the pretended washerwoman having hoisted on her head, started downstairs with it; Gwenthian, by direction, going along to see her

out of doors, assist her in cajoling the sentries, and bring back report whether these had been safely passed.

CHAPTER LIX.

BROUGHT HOME A PRISONER.

AFTER the cadgeress had gone out of the room the anxiety of the sisters was, for a while, of the keenest. The first flush of excitement over, they saw danger in what they had done. Should their messenger be stopped outside, and the note found upon her, there was that in it which could not fail to compromise them. Moreover its contents had reference to an important matter, a design that would be all defeated.

Luckily they had not long to endure suspense. A light tread on the stairs told of Gwenthian returning ; and as she appeared in the doorway, kept open for her, the joyous expression on her face

betokened a successful issue to the affair she had been sent upon.

"Win's got safe away!" was her triumphant announcement, as she tripped lightly into the room.

"Good!" exclaimed both, Sabrina going on to inquire particulars.

"Did they let her pass without any questioning?"

"No, indeed, mistress. The sentries at the back gate—there are two at it—stopped her; and one pulled the bundle off her head. They were going to open and examine it, when Captain Trevor came up, and ordered them to put it back again. Then he passed her through the gate, saying something—like in a friendly way."

"Did you hear what he said?"

"Only to the soldiers; telling them to let the washerwoman alone. But Win gave them a bit of her tongue too, as if she was real angry!"

"You saw her well away?"

"Yes, mistress; beyond where there were any of the people. She took the path to the falconer's lodge, where she's to leave the things."

"Why leave them there?"

"Because she don't intend returning to her own cottage. That, she said, would delay her; besides, some of the soldiers might be straying along the Ruardean road, and stop her again. She's gone the way through the woods."

The ladies felt relieved. Win would manage it if woman could; and should she succeed in reaching Gloucester, they might ere long look for other relief from the dangers that environed them.

But there was something to be done meanwhile; their unwelcome visitors to be entertained. And how to extend hospitality to such was a perplexing problem. Not only their numbers, but their character made it so. The common soldiers could take care of themselves outside; the signs and

sounds told they were already doing so ; but the Prince himself, and the officers in his suite, would have to be treated in a different way. Dinner had been spoken of—supper as called then—and this was the first thing to be thought about.

“Go down again, Gwenth,” commanded Sabrina, acting mistress of the mansion, “tell the cook to set it upon the table as soon as it is ready.”

“For how many, my lady?”

“Oh! I can’t tell. Let her count for, say a score; and send in all the eatables she can command.”

As the maid went kitchenward to deliver the somewhat indefinite directions, her young mistresses turned to making their toilette at length and at last. And, perhaps, never was one made more reluctantly, or less elaborately, for a Prince of the blood Royal. Little cared they how they might look in his eyes, or any other eyes that were to be upon them. For their hearts were full

of heaviness; oppressed by keen anxiety about their father—still apprehending his return home. They knew how much he was compromised with the King's party; had been ever since the rebellion began, and before. For, ere blow had been struck, or sword drawn, had he not resisted the loan by Privy Seal? And here again at Hollymead were the two men who had attempted to levy that loan upon him—Colonel Lunsford and Captain Reginald Trevor! They would be satisfied with no money contribution now; but meant making him their prisoner, with some severe punishment for his "delinquency."

So feared his daughters at that hour; and, as a consequence, had little care or thought about anything besides; even of the peril impending over themselves.

"It's strange, Rej Trevor behaving in such a way to Win," remarked Vaga, as she stood before the mirror adjusting her rebellious tresses. He

couldn't help knowing her, as she herself says. Once seen she's not the sort to be easily forgotten. And after that encounter they had on the Cat's Hill! Very strange, isn't it?"

"Yes, indeed," assented Sabrina, "I've been wondering at it myself, and at something besides."

"What besides?"

"His behaviour in every way. He seems altogether changed."

"I've had no opportunity of observing it. What makes you think so?"

"While you were apart with the Prince we had some conversation. He talks quite differently from his old frivolous way. And no more has he the swaggering manner which used to be so offensive."

"Then he's not the conceited Cavalier of twelve months ago?"

"Anything but that. Had I not known him in the past I should set him down for a modest

young fellow, of rather melancholy temperament ; or more like one who had some sorrow preying upon him."

"What can it be, I wonder?"

She had her conjecture as to what, but forbore declaring it. She had not forgotten—how could she?—his confession, made in passionate appeal, at their last interview. She knew his indifference at their parting was the purest affectation, and that the fish he had gone to catch had not been caught.

Recalling that scene, her sister could have answered the question with a near approach to the truth. But she, too, retentive of her real thoughts, but said in careless rejoinder,—

"Oh ! I suppose the events of the war, which have had a saddening effect on everybody."

"Not everybody. These self-invited guests of ours are at least an exception. Listen to them !"

By this the officers of the Prince's escort had

entered the house ; and from their loud talk and laughter were evidently making themselves at home and free with everything. They could be heard issuing commands, and calling out orders to the servants, as though the place were a public inn.

“Like as not,” continued Vaga, still incredulous about Reginald Trevor’s conversion, “like as not your ‘modest young fellow of rather melancholy temperament’ is laughing among the loudest of them. I fancy I hear his voice.”

“No, Vag, I don’t think you do. I can’t.”

“Well, may be not. And it’s to be hoped he’s sobered, as you say. He needed it. Strange if he is though, in the retinue of Prince Rupert, whose precept and example are more likely to have a reverse tendency. Possibly Master Rej is only humble in the presence of the High Mightiness, his master. When the big dog is by, the little one has to be on its good behaviour.”

"I scarce think it's that ; and you may be wronging him."

"If I am I shall be glad to know it. But how odd all this !" she added, yielding to a sudden recollection. "Time was when you, Sab, were all the other way about Rej Trevor ; used to caution me against him !"

She had faced towards her sister, and stood with hands full of loose hair that fell as a cataract of molten gold over her ivory shoulders.

"True, I did. And with reasons then. Our father was against him more than I ; which may have influenced me."

"And now ?"

"Now I admit never having believed him so very bad—I mean at heart."

"Oh ! nobody ever said he had a very bad heart. His head was more blamed for getting him ill repute."

"His habits rather."

"Say habits, then. But why are you thus defending him?"

"Because of his seeming so friendly to us. All he said to me just now, with his manner, was as one who felt sorry at our being thus intruded on. He knows it's not agreeable to us—cannot be. And his behaviour to Win—that confirms my belief that he has no hostile feelings to us."

"Don't be so confident till we're sure she's safe off. It may be only a trap to catch us. How know we he hasn't followed to bring her back again, and so win favour from his princely patron. I wouldn't wonder if it's something of that kind. For in what other way is his conduct to be accounted for?"

"Heaven help us if it be that! But I won't—can't believe it."

"Well, we shall soon know, now. If Win get away, I'll think better of Rej Trevor than I've ever done."

“If she do, to-morrow’s sun may see soldiers here in green uniforms, with red ones as their prisoners, and you and I, sister, will have done something for the good cause—for Liberty !”

In her most tranquil mien Sabrina Powell was an imposing personage ; but now, excited to enthusiasm by the word “Liberty” on her lips, and its inspiration in her heart, with her grand eyes aglow, she looked its very Goddess.

She had finished her toilette, and stood at the window, a front one, commanding view of the avenue and entrance gate of the park. But not long was she there before seeing that which brought a black shadow upon her brow, with chill fear into her heart.

“Oh, Vaga !” she called to her sister, still at the mirror, “come hither ! See what’s down yonder !”

The summons, in tone almost of agony, drew the other instantly to her side, with tresses trailing. To see three horsemen, who had just passed

through the gate, and were coming on for the house. They rode abreast; he in the middle being in sombre civilian garb, the two who flanked him wearing the scarlet uniform of the soldiers already around the house.

"'Tis Rees!" exclaimed Sabrina, recognising the groom. "They've taken him prisoner!"

"Indeed, yes; 'tis he. Oh, sister, dear! if father should be coming home now? I hope he's still in Gloucester!"

Vain hope; almost on the instant to know disappointment. For before those already entered were half way up the long avenue, more red coats were seen riding through the gate, in their midst a man in dark dress—he, too, evidently conducted as a prisoner.

"'Tis father!"

CHAPTER LX.

QUARTERED UPON THE ENEMY.

NIGHT had descended over Hollymead. A dark night, too, though there was no lack of light inside the house or around it. Nearing November the atmosphere had a frosty feel, and great wood fires were burning in the wide chimney places of the reception-rooms. Without, in the centre of the court-yard, a very bonfire had been kindled, which sent its red glare and glow to the most distant corner of the inclosure. Around this were seated or standing, in every variety of attitude, such of the common soldiers of the escort as were not upon duty. Carousing, of course. For the rank and file of the Royalist army, especially that portion of it which acted under Rupert, followed

the fashion of their officers ; and one of the affectations of Cavalierism was to display a superior capacity for indulgence in drink.

About the house they had found the where-withal to give them a good supper, with more than drink enough to wash it down. For when Monmouth fell into the hands of the Parliamentarians, the Master of Hollymead, thinking it safe, had done something to restock his pastures, as also replenish larder and cellars. And once more these were in the way of getting speedily depleted ; the thirsty troopers around the court-yard fire quaffing at free tap, from a cask of ale they had rolled out upon the pavement ; while they bandied coarse jests, told indecent stories, or sang songs of like character, roaring in chorus.

Inside there was revelry also. Of a less rude kind ; still revelry, and coarse enough, considering that they who indulged in it composed the *entourage* of a Prince. In the dining-hall was it being

held, around a table on which stood a varied assortment of bottles and decanters, goblets and glasses. There had been a repast upon it, that same dinner-supper; but the dishes and *débris* of solids had been removed, and only the drinking materials remained. Nearly a score of guests encircled it, all gentlemen; and all in military uniform—being the officers of the escort—not a man in citizen garb seen among them. For the master of the house was not at the head of his own table as might have been expected. Instead, shut up in one of the rooms adjacent; its door locked, and a sentry stationed outside!

His daughters were upstairs, in their private apartment, from which they had never come down. Through the window they had seen their father brought back under guard, as a felon; saw it with indignation, but also fear. Greater became the last, when told they could not hold speech with him, or have access to the room in which he was

confined. Denied interview with their own father, in their own house! Inhumanity that augured ill for what was to come after.

What this might be they could neither tell nor guess. They even feared to reflect upon it; trembling at every footstep on the stairs. Though no key had been turned upon them, nor sentry set at their door, they were as much imprisoned as their father. For the Prince's retinue of servants filled the house, tramping and roaming about everywhere, and bullying the family domestics. It was not safe to go out among them; and the young ladies had locked themselves up, dreading insult, if not absolute outrage. Even Gwenthian dared not trust herself downstairs, and shared their confinement.

What did it all mean? Why such change in the behaviour of the Prince, so late pretending amiability? For his people must have sanction, or they would not be so acting.

The explanation was simple, withal. Shortly after Rupert's arrival at Hollymead, a courier, who had followed him from Monmouth, brought tidings of another Royalist reverse—Chepstow, with its castle, taken or closely beleaguered. Exasperated by the intelligence, he no longer resisted the wicked proposals of Lunsford, but gave willing assent to them. And now, having thrown off the mask, he had determined on taking the whole Powell family back with him to Bristol. As his prisoner there he could do with the "bit of saucy sweetness" as it might please him; as he had done with many other unfortunate women whom the chances of war had brought within his wanton embrace.

It had been all settled, save some details about the departure from Hollymead, the time, and the return route. These were now being discussed between him and the commanding officer of his escort, as they sate at a side table to which they

had temporarily withdrawn, to be out of earshot of the others.

"Should we remain here for the night, *mein* Colonel, or make back to Monmouth? We can get there before midnight."

"That we could, easily enough, your Highness. But why go by Monmouth at all?"

"Why not?"

"There are two reasons against it, Prince. Both good ones."

"Give them, Sir Thomas."

"If it be true that Chepstow's lost to us, there may be a difficulty in our crossing the Wye down there. Or getting over to the Aust passage of the Severn, with such a weak force as attends your Highness."

"*Gott!* yes; I perceive that. But what's your other reason against Monmouth way?"

"A more delicate one. To pass through that town with such a captive train, as your Highness

will have, might give tongue for scandal. The venerable Marquis of Worcester is rather squeamish ; besides not being your best friend. You know that, Prince ? ”

“ I do know it, and will some day make him sorry for it, the old Papist hypocrite. But what other route would you have us take ? ”

“ Down through the Forest direct, and across the Severn, either at Newnham or Westbury. There’s a ferry at both places, with horse-boats enough to take us all over in a trip or two. We may reach Berkeley Castle before daylight ; where, if it be your Highness’s pleasure to lie up for the day, you could enter Bristol on the following night without all the world being the wiser as to the sort of prisoners we carried in.”

“ Egad ! your reasons are good. I’m inclined to follow your advice, and return by the route you speak of. Are you well acquainted with it, *mein* Colonel ? ”

"Reasonably well, your Highness. But Captain Trevor knows it better than I. He was longer with Sir John Wintour, and is familiar with every crook and turn of the Forest roads in that quarter. There can be no danger of our going astray."

"But the night's dark as pitch. So one has just told me."

"True it is now, your Highness. But there'll be a moon this side midnight, and that will be time enough to start. We can make Berkeley before morning—prisoners, crossing the Severn, and all delays notwithstanding. Next night your Highness may sleep in your own bed within the walls of Bristol Castle, with a sweet creature to share it—whom I need not designate by name."

"She *shall* share it!" rejoined the Royal reprobate, in reckless but determined tone, his wicked passions fired by the wine he had been drinking. "And we go that way, Colonel. So see that all be ready for the route soon as the moon shows

her sweet face. Meanwhile, let us back to our comrades and be merry."

Saying which he returned to the chair he had vacated at the head of the table, the other along with him ; then, grasping a filled goblet, he called out the Cavalier's orthodox sentiment "The Wenches !" adding,—

"Colonel Lunsford will respond with a song, gentlemen !"

Which the Colonel did ; giving that they liked best, with a chorus they could all join in,—

"We'll drink, drink ;
And our goblets clink,
Quaffing the blood-red wine.
The wenches we'll toast,
And the Roundheads we'll roast,
The Croppies and all their kind."

The coarse refrain, with the ribald jests that followed it, could be heard all over the house, reaching the ears of its imprisoned owner. Even

those of his daughters, more distant, did not escape being offended by them. No wonder at both having in their hearts, if not on their lips, the prayer,—
“God speed Win upon her errand !”

CHAPTER LXI.

A COURAGEOUS WADER.

THE Severn was in flood, its wide valley a sheet of water, which extended miles from either bank, and far up north towards Worcester. Viewed from an eminence, it looked as if the primeval sea which once washed the foots of the Malvern Hills had rolled back over its ancient bed.

The city of Gloucester seemed standing on an island, some of its houses, that lay low, submerged, and only approachable by boats; while the causeways of the roads leading from it were under water, in places to a depth of several feet.

This it was which had hindered Ambrose Powell arriving at Hollymead House many hours earlier

than that on which he was taken to it a prisoner. For, soon as receiving news of the recapture of Monmouth, instinctively apprehending danger to the dear ones so unwisely left alone, he had hurriedly started homeward ; to be delayed by the obstructing flood. Nearing home with heart a prey to anxiety, harassed by the thought of his own imprudence ; at length reaching it to find his worst fears realized ; himself no longer free.

The waters still prevailing in the Severn Valley and around Gloucester, it seemed impossible to enter that city, save by boat. Yet on that same night a pedestrian could have been seen making towards it from the direction of Mitcheldean ; one who meant it as the objective point of her journey—for it was a woman.

The great cathedral clock was just tolling nine p.m. as she descended into the lowlands near Highnam, and came to a stop by the edge of the inundated district. It was dark, the moon still

below the horizon ; but her precursory rays, reflected from fleecy clouds above it, threw a faint light over the aqueous surface, sufficient to make objects distinguishable at a good hundred yards' distance. Copses that seemed islets, with the tufted heads of pollarded willows rising weird-like out of the water, were the conspicuous features of the flooded landscape. Rows of the latter marked the boundaries of meadows ; but two running parallel, with a narrower list between, indicated the causeway of the road.

The woman had approached this point at a rapid pace ; and, though brought to a stand, it was but a momentary pause, without thought of turning back. Her attitude, and the expression upon her features, told of a determination to continue on, and get inside Gloucester if that were possible. In all haste, too ; for as the strokes of the great clock-bell came booming over the water, she counted them with evident anxiety, in fear

of their tolling ten instead of nine. Even the lesser number seemed scarcely to satisfy her ; as if, withal, she might be too late for the business she was bent upon.

She but waited for the final reverberation ; then, drawing her skirts knee high, walked boldly into the flood, and onward.

Ankle-deep at the first step, she was soon in water that washed around her garters. Here and there, with a current too, which threatened to sweep her off her feet. But it did not deter her from advancing ; and on went she, without stop, or show of hesitation ; no sign of quailing in her eye.

At knee's depth, as ere long she was, still enough of her showed above the surface to represent the stature of an ordinary woman. For she was not an ordinary woman, in height or otherwise—being Winny, the cadgeress.

On tramped the courageous wader, on plunged,

till the water was up to mid thigh. No more then did her face show fear; nor sign of intention to turn back. She would have gone on, had it come to swimming. For swim she could; many the time having bathed her body in both Severn and Wye. That was not needed now, though very near it. Even over the raised ridge of the causeway the flood was feet deep. But, familiar with the route, having the landmarks in her memory—for it was not her first time to travel that road when submerged—she knew all its turns and bearings; how to take them; took them; and at length having passed the deepest depths, saw before her the Severn's bridge, with its elevated *tête-de-pont*; and, beyond, the massive tower of the cathedral, amidst a surrounding of roofs and chimneys.

Her perilous journey was near its end, the toilsome journey nigh over; and she felt happy. For, as through frost some twelve months before, she had approached Bristol with pleasant anticipations,

so now was she about to enter Gloucester with the same, and from a similar cause.

Her expectancy was realized sooner than she had hoped for; the result identical to a degree of oddness. For just as upon that night at Bristol, so on this at Gloucester, Rob Wilde chanced to be guard-sergeant of the gate by which she sought admission.

And once again went their great arms around each other; their lips closing in kisses loud and fervent as ever.

"God Almighty, Win!" he exclaimed, still holding her in honest, amorous embrace, "what be't now? Why hast thee comed hither through the flood? Dear girl! ye be's wet up to the——"

"No matter how high, Rob," she said, interrupting, "if't 'twor up to the neck, there be good reasons for't."

"What reasons?"

"News I ha' brought frae Ruardean; rayther us ought say Hollymead."

"Bad news be they? I needn't ax; I see't in your face."

"Bad enough; though nothin' more than might ha' been expected after the Cavaliers bein' back at Monnerth, an' master's theer. Ye ha' heerd that, I suppose?"

"Oh, certainly! The news got here day afore yesterday, in the night. But fra Hollymead?"

"A troop o' em there, numberin' nigh two hundred; horse sodjers in scarlet, wi' all sorts o' grand trappins; the Prince Rupert's they be. Us ha' come wi' a message to Sir Richard. So I needn't tell ye who't be from."

"No, you needn't. I can guess. Then ye maun see him at once?"

"Wi' not a minute's delay. Us ha' got a letter for him; an' she as sent it sayed the deliverin' be a thing o' life an' death. I knows that myself, Rob."

"Come along, love! The colonel be in his quar-

ters, I think. He wor by the gate here only a short whiles ago, and gied me orders for reportin' to him there. Another kiss, Win dear, fore's we get into company."

The favour was conceded soon as asked; and, after another hug, with more than one osculation, the two great figures moved off side by side through the darkness.

CHAPTER LXII.

THEIR DEAR ONES IN DANGER.

AS the sergeant conjectured, Colonel Walwyn was in his quarters ; Eustace Trevor, his almost constant companion, along with him. The ever-active Governor of Gloucester was absent on another of his many expeditions, and had left Colonel Broughton in chief command of the garrison, Sir Richard commanding its cavalry force, with a separate jurisdiction.

The duties of the day over, with all guards stationed for the night, he, with his young troop captain, having just completed the "Grand Rounds," had returned to quarters, and taken seat by a brisk wood fire ; the night, as already said, being chill.

Hubert was bustling about in attendance upon

them ; for, though a gaudy trumpeter, he took delight in serving his revered colonel in every possible capacity. There was nothing menial in waiting upon such a master—so thought the faithful henchman.

He had uncorked a bottle of claret, and placed it on the table between them, which they proceeded to discuss as they reviewed the events of the day. The knight was no anchorite, neither the *ci-devant* gentleman-usher ; both accustomed to take their wine in a moderate way. And both habitually cheerful, save when some reverse of arms gave reason for their being otherwise.

Such there was now, or lately had been—that of Monmouth still in their minds. Sir Richard regretted not having been himself charged to keep the place he had been chiefly instrumental in capturing. Had it been so, the enemy would not so easily have retaken it. That he might well think or say, without any self-conceit. For in the most

blundering manner had Major Throgmorton, left in temporary command, managed its defence ; in truth, making no defence at all, but allowing the Royalists to re-enter almost without striking blow.

The affair was truly farcical, however serious for the Parliament. Its County Committee was at the time in session ; decreeing fines and sequestrations against the Monmouthshire "malignants" ; when all at once confronted by the very men with whose estates and chattels they were playing at confiscation ; these armed, and angrily vociferating — "Surrender ! you are our prisoners !"

Never were judicial deliberations brought to a more abrupt ending ; never transfer of authority more ludicrously sudden. Though it was aught but a jesting matter to the dispossessed ones, who from a comfortable council-chamber were instantly hurried off to the cells of a dismal jail.

Of course the Cavaliers made much fun over

the affair ; while reversely their adversaries were chagrined and humiliated by it.

Few grieved over the event in a greater degree than Colonel Walwyn and Captain Eustace Trevor ; for they had special reasons.

"I only wish I'd known of that danger when we got Massey's order to march hither," observed the former, as they sat sipping their wine.

"What would you have done, Sir Richard ?"

"Disobeyed it ; and marched our men in the opposite direction—to Monmouth."

"Ah, true ! A pity you didn't. It might have been the saving of the place."

"No use lamenting the disaster now it's done. Would that the taking of the town were all you and I, Trevor, have concern about ! Unfortunately it isn't. What madness leaving the girls at Hollymead—absolute insanity !"

"It was. I thought so at the time, as did Vaga."

"Sabrina too; everybody but Powell himself. He couldn't be convinced there was any danger; and I still hope there may not be. But who knows what the upshot now? I tremble to think of it."

"It's to be regretted, we didn't more press him to come away with us."

"Oh! that would have been of no use. I did urge it on him—far as I could becomingly. But he had one of his obstinate, pig-headed fits upon him that day, and would listen to no reason. It's not pleasant having to speak so of him, whom we both look forward to as our future father-in-law; but when he's in that frame of mind Heaven and earth wouldn't move him. Nor the devil frighten him either. You remember how he braved Lunsford, and that precious cousin of yours, when they came to collect the King's loan. True, he had us, and something besides, at his back. But without that he'd have defied them all the same; ay, had

the whole Royalist army been there threatening him with instant death."

"That I fully believe. Yet one cannot help admiring his independence of spirit—so much of manhood in it, and so rare!"

"Ay, true. But in that case too much recklessness. It has begot danger, and may bring disaster upon all of us—if it hasn't already."

The last words, spoken in a grave, almost despondent tone, fell unpleasantly on the ear of Eustace Trevor, already sufficiently apprehensive of the thing hinted at.

"In what way, colonel?" he queried anxiously. "Are you thinking of any special danger?"

"I am, indeed; and to our dear ones."

"But how? From what—whom?"

"Rather ask 'from where?' and I'll answer 'Monmouth.' Now that the Royalists are masters there, almost for certain they'll be raiding up into the Forest; and likely, too likely, a party pay visit

to Hollymead. That, as you know, Trevor, were danger enough to those we have fears for!"

"But now that their father has gone to fetch them away? He should be there long before this."

"And long before this may be too late. Just what I'm most anxious about—the time of his arrival at Hollymead; for I know he won't stay there an instant. Poor man! he's sadly repentant of his imprudent act, and will make all haste to bring them back with him. The fear is of the flood having delayed him too long at starting—my fear."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the young officer, "let us hope not."

"If Massey were here," continued the other, a thought striking him, "I'd ask leave to go after him. Indeed, I feel half-inclined to take it, without asking."

"And why not, Colonel? We could be at Ruardean and back before morning—riding at a pace."

Sir Richard was silent, seeming to ponder. Only for a few seconds; when, as if resolved, he sprang to his feet, saying,—

“I’ll risk it, whatever the result. And we shall start at once, taking our own fellows along with us. Hubert!”

Quick as the call came the trumpeter from an ante-room, where he had stayed in waiting. To receive the order,—

“To the men’s quarters, and sound the ‘Assembly’! Lose not a moment!”

And not a moment lost the trumpeter, knowing that when Colonel Walwyn gave an order in such excited strain it meant promptest obedience. Snatching up his trumpet, as he hurried out through the ante-room, he was in the street in an instant hurrying towards the cavalry quarters.

CHAPTER LXIII.

AN EXCITING EPISTLE.

“TREVOR!” cried the colonel to his troop-captain, now also upon his feet, and sharing his excitement; “send out an orderly to summon Harley and our other officers. Perhaps you had best go yourself. You know where to find them, I suppose?”

“I think I do, colonel.”

“Use all despatch. As we’ve made up our minds to this thing the sooner we’re in the saddle the better.”

The counsel to make haste was little called for. Eustace Trevor itched to be in the saddle, as ever disciple of St. Hubert on the first day of fox-hunting. But just as he was about to step over

the threshold of the outer door, he saw a party approaching evidently with the design to enter. Two individuals they were, a man and woman, still within the dim light of the overshadowing houses. For all, he had no difficulty in recognising them. Colossal stature as theirs was far from common ; the pair being Rob Wilde and Winny.

He saw them with some surprise—at least the woman. For he had not expected seeing her there. There she was, though ; and, as quick intuition told him, her presence might have some bearing on that he was about to issue forth, for he awaited their coming up.

Soon they stood at the door, face to face with him ; the sergeant saluting soldier fashion, while the woman curtseyed.

“You, Winifred !” exclaimed the young officer. “I was not aware of your being in Gloucester.”

“Her han’t been in it more’n ten minutes, captain,” said the sergeant, speaking for her. “I

ha' just lets her in at the gate. Her be wantin' a word wi' the colonel."

"She'll be welcome to that, I'm sure. But first go in yourself and see."

This was in accordance with military etiquette, indeed regulations; no stranger admitted to the presence of a commanding officer without being announced, and permission given. Rob himself came not under the rule, and was about to pass inside; when a thought occurring to Captain Trevor, the latter turned upon his heel and preceded him.

"Well, Wilde, what is it?" asked Sir Richard, as they entered the room. Eagerly, too, seeing that the features of the big sergeant wore a portentous expression. "Any trouble with your gate-guard?"

"No, colonel; nothin' o' that."

"Some news come in?"

"Just so, Sir Richard; an' not o' the best neyther."

"Indeed! What news? Whence?"

"Fra Ruardean, or, to speak more partickler, fra Hollymead House."

Both colonel and captain were now all ears. No spot on the habitable globe had such interest for them as Hollymead House, and from nowhere was intelligence so eagerly desired.

"Tell it, sergeant!" was the impatient command.

"A party o' the King's soldiers be quartered there—cavalry."

"O God!" exclaimed Eustace Trevor, almost in a groan; the knight also showing grievously affected.

"How did you get this news?"

"Win ha' brought it."

"Win?"

"Yes, colonel. Her be outside the door—waitin permission to speak wi' you. She ha' been trusted wi' a letter from the young ladies."

"Bring her in—instantly!"

"Singular coincidence, Trevor!" said Sir Richard,

as the sergeant passed out. "Already at Hollymead ! Just what we've been fearing !"

"Indeed, so. And all the more reason for our being there too."

"I wonder who they are. Lingen's, think you?"

"Rob says they're quartered there. That would hardly be Lingen's—so near his own garrison at Goodrich? More like some of Lord Herbert's Horse from Monmouth. And I hope it may be they."

"Ah ! true ; it might be worse. But we'll soon hear. The cadgeress can tell, no doubt ; or it'll be in the letter."

The door, reopening, showed the Forest Amazon outside, Rob conducting her in. They could see that she was wet to the waist, her saturated skirt clinging around limbs of noble outline ; while her heaving bosom, with the heightened colour of her cheeks, told of a journey but just completed, and made in greatest haste.

"You have a letter for me?" said Sir Richard interrogatively, as she stepped inside the room.

"Yes, your honner, fra Hollymead."

She spoke with hand raised to her head, as if adjusting one of the plaits of her hair. Instead, she was searching among them for the concealed epistle. Which, soon found, was handed over to him for whom it was intended.

No surprise to Sir Richard at seeing a thing more like curl-paper than letter. It was not the first time for him to receive such, in a similar way; and, straightening it out under the lamplight, he was soon acquainted with its contents.

So far from having the effect of allaying his excitement they but increased it, and he cried out to the sergeant, as he had to the trumpeter,—

"Quick to the men's quarters, Wilde, and help getting all ready for the route! Hubert's there by this time, and will have sounded the 'Assembly.' Read that, Trevor! There's something that con-

cerns you," and he handed the letter to his troop-captain.

The sergeant hurried away, leaving Win to be further questioned by the colonel. And while this was going on the young officer perused the epistle, to be affected by it in a similar fashion. It ran thus :—

"Ill tidings, Richard. Prince Rupert here, with his escort—about two hundred. Has just arrived, and intends staying the night; indeed till father return home, he says. I hope father will not come home, unless you come with him. I'm sure they mean him harm. That horrid man, Lunsford, is in the Prince's suit; Reginald Trevor too. Winny will tell you more; I fear to lose time in writing. *Dear Richard! come if you can.*"

So the body of the epistle, with below a post-script, in a different handwriting, well known to Eustace Trevor :—

"Dearest Eustace! we are in danger, I *do* believe."

The words were significant; and no form of appeal for rescue could have been more pressing. Nor was such needed; neither any urging of haste upon the men thus admonished.

Never was squadron of cavalry sooner in the saddle, after getting orders, than was "Walwyn's Horse" on that night. In less than twenty minutes later, they went at a gallop through the north-western gate of Gloucester, opened to give them exit; then on along the flooded causeway, riding rowells deep, plunging and flinging the spray-drops high in air, till every man was dripping wet, from the plume in his hat to the spurs upon his heels.

CHAPTER LXIV.

A HOUSE ON FIRE.

THE moon had risen, but only to be seen at intervals. Heavy cumuli drifting sluggishly athwart the sky, now and then drew curtain-like over her disk, making the earth dark as Erebus. Between these recurrent cloud eclipses, however, her light was of the clearest ; for the atmosphere otherwise was without haze or mist.

She was shining in full effulgence, as a body of horsemen commenced breasting the pitch which winds up from Mitcheldean to the Wilderness. Their distinctive standard was sheathed—not needing display in the night ; but the green uniforms, and the cocks'-tail feathers pluming their hats, told them to be Walwyn's Horse—the Foresters.

They were still wet with the flood-water through which they had waded after clearing the gates of Gloucester. Their horses too; the coats of these further darkened by sweat, save where the flakes of white froth, tossed back on their necks and counters, gave them a piebald appearance. All betokened a terrible pace, and such had they kept up, scarce slowing for an instant from the flood's edge till they entered the town of Mitcheldean.

Then it was but a momentary halt in the street, and without leaving the saddle; just long enough to inquire whether Master Ambrose Powell had that day passed through the place. He had; late in the afternoon. On horseback, without any attendant, and apparently in great haste.

"Prisoner or not, they have him at Hollymead now," observed Sir Richard to Eustace Trevor, as they trotted on through the town to the foot of the hill where the road runs up to the Wilderness.

To gallop horses already blown against that

steep acclivity would have been to kill them. But the leader of the party, familiar with it, did not put them to the test; instead, commanded a walk. And while riding side by side, he and his troop-captain held something of a lengthened conversation, up to that time only a few hurried words having been exchanged between them.

"I wish the letter had been a little more explicit as to their numbers," said Sir Richard. "About two hundred may mean three, or only one. A woman's estimate is not the most reliable in such matters."

"What did the cadgeress say of it, Colonel? You questioned her, I suppose?"

"Minutely; but to no purpose. She only came to the house after they had scattered all around it, and, of course, had no definite idea of their number. So we shan't know how many we'll have to cross swords with, till we get upon the ground."

"If we have the chance to cross swords with any. I only wish we were sure of that."

"The deuce! They may be gone away, you think?"

"Rather fear it, Sir Richard. Powell must have reached Hollymead before nightfall; and if they intended making him a prisoner 'twould be done at once; with no object for their staying afterwards."

"Unless they have done a long day's march, and meant to quarter there for the night. If they went thither direct from Bristol, which is like enough, that's just what they'd do; stay the night, and start back for Bristol in the morning."

"I have fears, Colonel, we won't find it so. More likely the Prince was at Monmouth on account of what's happened there; and will return to it—has returned already."

"If so, Trevor, 'twill be a black night for you and me; a bitter disappointment, and something worse. If he's gone from Hollymead, so will they

—father, daughters, all. Rupert's not the sort to leave such behind, with an abettor like Tom Lunsford. As for your cousin, remember how you crossed him. It's but natural he should feel spiteful, and show it in that quarter."

"If he do, I'll cross him worse when we come to crossing swords. And I'll find the chance. We've made mutual promise to give no quarter—almost sworn it. If ill befall Vaga Powell through him, I'll keep that promise faithfully as any oath."

"But right you should. And for settling scores you may soon have the opportunity; I trust within the hour."

"Then, Colonel, *you* think they'll still be at Hollymead."

"I hope it rather; grounding my hope on another habit of this German Prince. One he has late been indulging to excess, 'tis said."

"Drink?"

"Just so. In the which Lunsford, with head hard as his heart, will stand by him cup for cup."

"But can that effect their staying at Hollymead?"

"Certainly it can; probably will."

"How, Sir Richard?"

"By their getting inebriated there; or, at all events, enough so to make them careless about moving off before the morning. The more, as they can't be expecting any surprise from this side. You remember there was a fair stock of wine in the cellars when we were there, best sorts too. Let loose at that, they're likely to stay by it as long as the tap runs."

"God grant it may run till morning then!" was the prayer of the young officer, fervently spoken. In his ways of thought and speech two years' campaigning had made much change, deepening the gravity of one naturally of serious turn.

"No matter about morning," rejoined Sir Richard. "If it but hold out for another hour, and we find

them there, something else will then be running red as the wine. Ah, Master Lunsford! One more meeting with you, that's what I want now. If I'm lucky enough to have it this night, this night will be the last of your life."

The apostrophe, which was but a mental reflection, had reference to something Sabrina had been telling him, vividly recalled by the words in her latest letter, "that horrid man."

At the same instant, and in similar strain, was Eustace Trevor reflecting about his Cousin Reginald; making mental vow that, if Vaga suffered shame by him, neither would his life be of long endurance.

By this they had surmounted the pitch, and arrived at a spot both had good reason to remember. It was the piece of level turf where once baring blades they had come so near sending one or other out of the world. Their horses remembered it too—they were still riding the same—and with

a recollection, which had a result quaintly comical. Soon as on the ground, without check of rein or word said, they came to a sudden halt, turned head to head, snorting and angry-like, as if expecting a renewal of the combat !

All the more strange this behaviour on the part of the animals, that, since their hostile encounter, for now over two years they had been together in amiable association !

A circumstance so odd, so ludicrous, could not fail to excite the risibility of their riders ; and laugh both did, despite their serious mood at the moment. To their following it but caused surprise ; two alone comprehending, so far as to see the fun of it. These Hubert, the trumpeter, and the "light varlit" then so near coming to blows with him, who through thick and thin, had ever since stuck to the ex-gentleman usher, his master.

No doubt the little interlude would have led to some speech about it, between the chief actors in

the more serious encounter it recalled, but for something at that moment seen by them, turning their thoughts into a new channel. Away westward, beyond Drybrook, beyond Ruardean Ridge, the sky showed a clearness that had nought to do with the moon's light; instead was ruddier, and shone brighter, as this became obscured by a thick cloud drifting over her disk. A glowing, gleaming light, unusual in a way; but natural enough regarded as the glare of a conflagration—which in reality it was.

"House on fire over yonder!" cried one of the soldiers.

"May be only a haystack," suggested a second.

"More like a town, judgin' by the big blaze," reasoned a third.

"There's no town in that direction; only Ruardean, where's we be goin'."

"Why maunt it be Ruardean, then?" queried the first speaker; "or the church?"

"An' a good thing if't be the church," put in one of strong Puritan proclivities. "It want burnin' down, as every other, wi' their altars an' images. They be a curse to the country; the parsons too. They've taken sides wi' the stinkin' Cavaliers, agaynst Parliament and people, all along."

"That's true," endorsed another of like iconoclastic sentiments; "an' if it a'nt the church as be givin' up that light let's luminate it when we get there. I go for that."

A proposal which called forth a chorus of assenting responses.

While this play of words was in progress along the line of rank and file rearwards, the Colonel and Captain Trevor, at its head, were engaged in a dialogue of conjectures about the same—a brief one.

"What think you it is?" asked Sir Richard, as they sat halted in their saddles regarding the garish light. "It looks to be over Ruardean, or near it."

"A fire of some kind, Colonel. No common one either."

"A farmer's rick ?"

"I fear not ; would we were sure of its being only that !"

"Ha ! A house you think ?"

"I do, Sir Richard."

"And——?"

"The one we're making for !"

"By Heavens ! I believe it is. It bears that way to a point. Ruardean's more to the right. Yes, it must be Hollymead !"

Both talked excitedly, but no more words passed between them there and then. The next heard was the command—"March—double quick !" and down the hill to Drybrook went they at a gallop, over the tiny stream, and up the long winding slope round the shoulder of Ruardean Hill—without halt or draw on bridle. There only poising for an instant, as they came within view of the

village and saw the conflagration was not in, but wide away from it ; the glare and sparks ascending over the spot where Hollymead House should be, but was no more.

As, continuing their gallop, they rode in through the park gates, it was to see a vast blazing pile, like a bonfire built by Titans—the fagots' great beams heaped together confusedly—from which issued a hissing and crackling, with at intervals loud explosions, as from an ordnance magazine on fire.

CHAPTER LXV.

VERY NEAR AN ENCOUNTER.

MITCHELDEAN lies at the foot of the steep *façade*, already spoken of as forming a periphery to the elevated Forest district. The slope ascends direct from the western skirts of the little town; but outlying ridges also inclose it on the north, east, and south, so that even the tall spire of its church is invisible from any great distance. So situated, railways give it a wide berth; and few places better deserve the title "secluded." The only sort of traveller who ever thinks of paying it a visit is the "commercial," or some pedestrian tourist, crossing the Forest from the Severn side to view the more picturesque scenery of the Wye, with in-

tention to make stoppage at the ancient hostelry of the Speech House, midway between.

In the days of the saddle and pack-horse, however, things were different with Mitcheldean. Being on one of the direct routes of travel from the metropolis to South Wales, and a gate of entry, as it were, to the Forest on its eastern side, it was then a place of considerable note; its people accustomed to all sorts of wayfarers passing daily, hourly through it.

Since the breaking out of the Rebellion these had been mostly of the military kind, though not confined to either party in the strife. One would march through to-day, the other to-morrow; so that hearing the trample of hoofs rarely could the townsmen tell whether Royalists or Parliamentarians were coming among them, till they saw their standards in the street.

They would rather have received visit from neither; but, compelled to choose, preferred seeing

the soldiers of the Parliament. So when Walwyn's Horse came rattling along, their green coats, with the cocks'-tail feathers in their hats, distinguishable in the clear moonlight, the closed window shutters were flung open ; and night-capped heads — for most had been abed — appeared in them, without fear exchanging speech with the soldiers halted in the street below.

Altogether different their behaviour when, in a matter of ten minutes after, a second party of horsemen came to a halt under their windows ; these in scarlet coats, gold laced, with white ostrich feathers in their hats—the Prince of Wales's plume, with its appropriate motto of servility, "*Ich dien.*"

Seeing it, the townsmen drew in their heads, closed the shutters, and were silent. Not going back to their beds, however ; but to sit up in fear and trembling, till the renewed hoof-strokes told them of the halt over, and the red-coated Cavaliers ridden off again.

It need scarce be said that these were Rupert and his escort, *en route* for Westbury; and had Walwyn's Horse stopped ten minutes longer in Mitcheldean, the two bodies would have there met face to face; since they were proceeding in opposite directions. A mere accident hindered their encountering; the circumstance, that from the town two roads led up to the Forest, one on each side of the Wilderness, both again uniting in the valley of Drybrook. The northern route had been taken by the Parliamentary party ascending; while the Royalists descended by the southern one, called the "Plump Hill." Just at such time as to miss one another, though but by a few minutes. For the rearmost files of the former had barely cleared the skirts of the town going out, when the van of the latter entered it at a different point.

The interval, however, was long enough to prevent those who went Forestwards from getting

information of what they were leaving so close behind. Could they have had that, quick would have been their return down hill, and the streets of Mitcheldean the arena of a conflict to the cry, "No Quarter !"

As it was, the hostile cohorts passed peacefully through, out, and onwards on their respective routes ; though Prince Rupert knew how near he had been to a collision, and could still have brought it on. But that was the last thing in his thoughts ; instead, soon as learning what had gone up to the Forest, who they were, and who their leader, his stay in Mitcheldean was of the shortest, and his way out of it not Forestwards but straight on for the Severn.

And in all the haste he could make, cumbered as he was with captives. For he carried with him a captive train ; a small one, consisting of but three individuals—scarce necessary to say, Ambrose Powell and his daughters. They were on horse-

back ; the ladies wrapped in cloaks, and so close hooded that their faces were invisible. Even their figures were so draped as to be scarce distinguishable from those of men ; all done with a design, not their own, but that of those who had them in charge. In passing through Mitcheldean precautions had been taken to hinder their being recognised ; double files of their guards riding in close order on each side of them, so that curious eyes should not come too near. But, when once more out on the country road, the formation "by twos" was resumed ; the trio of prisoners, each with a trooper right and left, conducted behind the knot of officers on the Prince's personal staff, he himself with Lunsford leading.

Soon as outside the town the two last, as usual riding together, and some paces in the advance, entered on dialogue of a confidential character. The Prince commenced it, saying,—

"We've had a narrow escape, Sir Thomas."

"Does your Highness refer to our having missed meeting the party of Roundheads?"

"Of course I do—just that."

"Then, I should say, 'tis they who've had the narrow escape."

"*Nein*, Colonel! Not so certain of that, knowing who they are. These Foresters fight like devils; and, from all I could gather, they greatly outnumber us. I shouldn't so much mind the odds, but for how we're hampered. To have fought them, and got the worst of it, would have been ruinous to our reputation—as to the other thing."

"It isn't likely we'd have got the worst of it. Few get the better of your Highness that way."

Lunsford's brave talk was not in keeping with his thoughts. Quite as pleased was he as the Prince at their having escaped an encounter with the party of Parliamentarians. For never man dreaded meeting man more than he Sir Richard Walwyn. Words had of late been conveyed to

him—from camp to camp and across neutral lines—warning words, that his old enemy was more than ever incensed against him, and in any future conflict where the two should be engaged meant singling him out, and seeking his life. After what he had done now, was still doing, he knew another encounter with Walwyn would be one of life and death, and dreaded it accordingly.

“Still, Prince,” he added, “as you observe, considering our encumbrances, perhaps it’s been for the best letting them off.”

“Ay, if they let us off. Which they may not yet. Suppose some of the townsmen have followed, and told them of our passing through?”

“No fear of that, Prince. If any one did follow it’s not likely they could be overtaken. They were riding as in a race, and won’t draw bridle till they see the blaze over Hollymead. Then they’ll but gallop the faster—in the wrong direction.”

“The right one for us, if they do. But even so

they would reach Hollymead in less than an hour ; then turn short round to pursue, and in another hour be upon our heels. You forget that we can't say safety, till we're over the Severn."

"I don't forget that, Prince. But they won't turn round to pursue us."

"Why say you that, Sir Thomas? How know you they won't?"

"Because they won't suspect our having come this way ; never think of it. Before putting the torch to the old delinquent's house, I took the precaution to have all his domestics locked up in an out-building ; that they shouldn't see which way we went off. As they and the Ruardean people knew we came up from Monmouth they'll naturally conclude that we returned thither. So, your Highness, any pursuit of us will take the direction down Cat's Hill, instead of by Drybrook and down the Plump."

"Egad ! I hope so, Colonel. For, to speak

truth, I don't feel in the spirit for a fight just now."

It was not often Rupert gave way to cowardice, and more seldom confessed it; even in confidence to his familiars, of whom Lunsford was one of the most intimate. But at that hour he felt it to very fear. Perhaps from the wine he had drunk at Hollymead, now cold in him; and it might be his conscience weighted with the crime he was in the act of committing. Whatever the cause, his nervousness became heightened rather than diminished, as they marched on; and anxiously longed he to be on the other side of the Severn.

Not more so than his reprobate companion, whose bravado was all assumed; his words of confidence forced from him to gloss over the mistake he had made, in recommending the route taken. Sorry was he now, as his superior, they had not gone by Monmouth. Within its Castle walls

they would at that moment have been safe; instead of hurrying along a road, with the obstruction of a river in front, and the possibility of pursuit behind. Ay, the probability of it, as Lunsford himself knew well, feigning to ignore it.

“In any case, your Highness,” he continued, in the same strain of encouragement, “we’ll be out of their way in good time. From here it’s but a step down to Westbury.”

By this they had reached the head of the ravine-like valley in which stands Flaxley Abbey, and were hastening forward fast as the *impedimenta* of captives would permit. The road runs down the valley, which, after several sinuosities, debouches on the Severn’s plain. But, long before attaining this, at rounding one of the turns, their eyes were greeted by a sight which sent tremor to their hearts.

“*Mein Gott!*” cried the Prince, suddenly reining up, and speaking in a tone of mingled surprise and alarm, “you see, Sir Thomas?”

Sir Thomas did see—sharing the other's alarm, but without showing it—a sheet of water that shone silvery white under the moonlight overspreading all the plain below. The river aflood, and inundation everywhere!

“We'll not be able to cross at all?” pursued the Prince, in desponding interrogative. “Shall we?”

“Oh yes! your Highness, I think so,” was the doubting response. “The water can't be so high as to hinder us; at least not likely. There's a pier-head at Westbury Passage on both sides, and the boats will be there as ever. I don't anticipate any great difficulty in the crossing, only we'll have to wade a bit.”

“*Gott!* that will be difficulty enough—danger too.”

“What danger, your Highness? Through the meadows there's a raised causeway, and fortunately I'm familiar with every inch of it. While

with Sir John Wintour I had often occasion to travel it; more than once under water. Even if we can't make the Westbury Passage, we can that of Framilode, but a mile or two above. I've never heard of it being so flooded as to prevent passing over."

"It may be as you say, Sir Thomas. But the danger I'm thinking of has more to do with time than floods. Wading's slow work; and there's still the possibility of Walwyn and his green-coats coming on after us. Suppose they should, and find us floundering through the water?"

"No need supposing that, Prince. There isn't the slightest likelihood of it. I'd stake high that at this minute they're at the bottom of Cat's Hill, or, it may be, by Goodrich Ferry, seeking to cross over the Wye as we the Severn. And, like as not, Lingen will give them a turn if he gets word of their being about there. Sir Harry has now a strong force in the castle; and owes Dick Walwyn

a *revanche*—for that affair on the Hereford Road the morning after Kyrle led them into Monmouth.”

“For all, I wish we had gone Monmouth way,” rejoined Rupert, as his eyes rested doubtingly on the white sheet of water wide spread over the plain below. “I still fear their pursuing us.”

“Even if they should, your Highness, we need have no apprehension. The pursuit can’t be immediate; and, please God, in another hour or so, we’ll be over the Severn, as likely they on the other side of the Wye, with both rivers between them and us.”

“Would that I were sure of that, Colonel,” returned the Prince, still desponding, “which I’m not. However, we’ve no alternative now but to cross here—if we can. You seem to have a doubt of our being able to make the Passage of Westbury?”

“I’m only a little uncertain about it, your Highness.”

“ But sure about that of Framilode ? ”

“ Quite ; though the flood be of the biggest and deepest.”

“ *Ser wohl!* with that assurance I’m satisfied. But we must have things secure behind, ere we commence making our wade. And we may as well take the step now. So, Colonel, ride back along the line, detach a rear-guard, and place it under some officer who can be trusted. Lose not a moment. I stay at halt here, till you return to me.”

The commanding officer of the escort, as much alive to the prudence of this precaution as he who gave the orders for it, hastened to carrying them out. Done by detailing off a few of the rear-most files, with directions to remain as they were, while the main body moved forward. Then instructions given to the officer who was to take charge of them ; all occupying less than ten minutes’ time.

After which, Lunsford again placed himself by the side of the Prince, and the march was immediately resumed, down the valley of Flaxley, on for the flooded plain.

CHAPTER LXVI.

ON THE TRAIL.

WORDS cannot depict the feelings of Sir Richard Walwyn and Eustace Trevor as they reined up by the burning house. With both it was anguish of the keenest; for they knew who were the incendiaries, and that incendiarism was not the worst of it. They who ruthlessly kindled the flames had, with like ruth, carried off their betrothed ones. And for what purpose? A question neither colonel nor captain could help asking himself, though its conjectural answer was agony. For now more vividly than ever did Sir Richard recall what had been told him of Lunsford's designs upon Sabrina; while Trevor had also heard of Prince Rupert's partiality for Vaga.

As they sate in their saddles contemplating the ruin, they felt as might an American frontiersman, returned home to find his cabin ablaze, fired by Indian torch, his wife or daughters borne off in the brutal embrace of the savage.

No better fate seemed to have befallen the daughters of Ambrose Powell. White savages, very tigers, had seized upon and dragged them to their lair; it were no worse if red ones had been the captors. Rather would the bereaved lovers have had it so; sooner known their sweet-hearts buried under that blazing pile than in the arms of the profligate Rupert and Lunsford the "bloody."

Only for an instant did they give way to their anguish, or the anger which accompanied it—rage almost to madness. Both were controlled by the necessity of action, and the first wild burst over, action was taken—pursuit of the ravishers.

Some time, however, before it could be fairly

entered upon; inquiry made as to the direction in which they had gone. There were hundreds on the ground who could be interrogated. Half the people of Ruardean were there. Roused from their beds by the cry "Fire!" they had rushed out, and on to the scene of conflagration. But arrived too late to witness the departure of those who had set the torch, and could not tell what way they had gone. Neither could the house servants, now released from their lock-up; for to hinder them doing so was the chief reason for their having been confined.

As it was known to all that the Royalists had come up from Monmouth, conjecture pointed to their having returned thither. But conjecture was not enough to initiate such a pursuit; and Colonel Walwyn was too practised a campaigner to rely upon it. Certainty of the route taken by the enemy was essential, else he might go on a wild-goose chase.

As that could not be obtained at the burning house not a moment longer stayed he by it. Scarce ten minutes in all from the time of their arrival till he gave the command "About!" and about went they, back down the long avenue, and through the park gate.

Soon as outside, he shouted "Halt!" bringing all again to a stand; he himself, however, with Captain Trevor and Sergeant Wilde, advancing along the road in the direction of Cat's Hill. Only a hundred yards or so, when they reined up. Then, by command, the big sergeant threw himself out of his saddle; and, bending down, commenced examination of the ground.

Had Wilde been born in the American backwoods he would have been a noted hunter and tracker of the Leatherstocking type. As it was, his experience as a deerstealer in the Forest of Dean had been sufficient to make the taking up a horse's trail an easy matter, and easier that of a

whole troop. He could do it even in darkness ; for it was dark then—the moon under a cloud.

And he did it ; in an instant. Scarce was he astoop ere rising erect again, and turning face to Sir Richard, as if all had been ascertained.

“Well, Rob,” interrogated the latter, rather surprised at such quick work, “you see their tracks?”

“I do, Colonel.”

“Going Cat’s Hill way?”

“No, Colonel. The contrary—comin’ from. None o’em fresh neyther. Must a been made some time i’ the afternoon.”

“Have you assured yourself of that?”

“I have. But I’ll gie ’em another look, if ye weesh it, Colonel.”

“Do.”

The colossus again bent down and repeated his examination of the tracks, this time making a traverse or two, and going farther along the road. In a few seconds to return with a confirmation of

his former report. A troop of cavalry had passed over it, but only in one direction—upward, and some hours before sunset.

“Sure am I o’ that, as if I’d been here an’ seed em,” was the tracker’s concluding words.

“Enough!” said Sir Richard. “Into your saddle, and follow me.”

At which he gave his horse the spur, and trotted back towards the park gate. Not to rejoin his men, still at halt, however. Instead, he continued on along the road for Drybrook; the other two keeping with him.

At a like distance from the halted line he again drew up, and directed the sergeant to make a similar reconnaissance.

Here the reading of the sign occupied the tracker some little longer time; as there was a confusion of hoof marks—some turned one way, some the other. Those that had the toe towards Hollymead gate he knew to have been made by their own

horses ; but underneath, and nearly obliterated, were hundreds of others almost as fresh.

“That’s the trail of the scoundrels,” said Sir Richard, soon as the sergeant reported the result of his investigation. “They’ve gone over to the Gloucester side ; by Drybrook and Mitcheldean. How strange our not meeting them !”

“It is—very strange,” rejoined Trevor ; “but could they have passed through Mitcheldean without our meeting them ?”

“Oh yes they could, Captain,” put in Wilde, once more mounted ; “there be several byways through the Forest as leads there, ’ithout touchin’ o’ Drybrook. An’ I think I know the one them have took. Whens us get to where it branch off their tracks’ll tell.”

“Right ; they will,” said Sir Richard, laying aside conjecture, and calling to the officer in charge of the men to bring them on at quick pace.

At quick pace they came ; the Colonel, Captain

Trevor, and the big sergeant starting off before they were up, and keeping several horse lengths ahead.

The route they were taking was the same they had come by—back for Drybrook. But coming and going their attitude was different. Then erect, with eyes turned upward regarding the glare over Hollymead; now bent down, cheeks to the saddle bow, and glances all given to the ground. For, as Wilde had said, there were several byeways, any one of which the pursued party might have taken; and to go astray on the pursuit, even to the loss of ten minutes' time, might be fatal to their purpose—the feather's weight turning the scale.

But no danger now; the moon was giving a good light, and the road for long stretches was open, the trees on each side wide apart. So they had no difficulty in seeing what before they had not thought of looking for; the hoof-marks of many horses, that had gone towards Drybrook. The

tracks of their own, going the other way, had almost obliterated them ; still enough of the under ones were visible to show that two bodies of horse had passed in opposite directions, with but a short interval of time between.

As this could be noted without the necessity of stopping or slowing pace, Colonel Walwyn carried his men on in a brisk canter, designing halt only at the branch road of which the sergeant had spoken.

But long before reaching it they got information which made stoppage there unnecessary, as also further call on the ex-deerstealer's skill as a tracker—for the time. Given by a man mounted on a hotel hack, who, coming on at a clattering gallop, met them in the teeth. His cry "For the Parliament !" without being challenged, proclaimed him a friend. And he was ; the innkeeper of Mitcheldean, recognised on the instant by Sir Richard and Rob Wilde.

His coming up caused a halt ; for his business was with Colonel Walwyn—an errand quickly told.

“ Prince Rupert and two hundred horse, with prisoners, have passed through Mitcheldean ! ”

Half a dozen questions rapidly put, and promptly answered, elicited all the circumstances—the time, the direction taken, everything the patriotic Boniface could tell. They had come down the Plump Hill, and gone off by Abenhall—for Newnham or Westbury ; or they might be making for Lydney.

Down the Plump Hill ! That accounted for their not being met. And the time—so near meeting, yet missing them ! All the way to Hollymead and back for nothing !

But lamenting the lost hours would not recover them. They must be made good by greater speed ; and, without wasting another word, the spur was buried deeper, and faster rode the Foresters. Rode with a will ; few of them whose heart was not in the pursuit. They were on the slot of a hated foe,

against whom many had private cause of quarrel and vengeance. Prince Rupert, for the past twelve months, had been harrying the Forest district, making their homes desolate ; his licentious soldiers abusing their wives, sisters, and daughters—no wonder they wanted to come up with him !

At mad speed they went dashing around Ruardean Hill, down into the vale of Drybrook ; then up by the Wilderness, and down again to Mitcheldean ; once more startling the townspeople from their slumbers, and filling them with fresh alarm ; soon over on seeing it was the green-coats.

Only a glimpse of them was got, as they galloped on through ; staying not a moment, never drawing bridle till they came to the forking of the roads by Abenhall—the right for Littledean, Newham, and Lydney ; the left to Westbury. Then only for an instant, while Rob Wilde swung his stalwart form out of the saddle, and made inspection of the tracks. For the moon was once more

clouded, and he could not make them out, without dismounting.

As before, brief time it took him ; but a few seconds till he was back on his horse, saying, as he slung himself up,—

“ They’re gone Westbury ways, Colonel.”

And Westbury ways went the pursuers, reins loose and spurs plied afresh, with no thought of halting again, but a hope there would be no need for it, till at arm’s length with the detested enemy.

Even when the turn in Flaxley Valley brought the Severn in sight, with its wide sheet of flood water, they stayed not to talk of it. To them it was no surprise ; but a few hours before they had waded it farther up. No more was it matter of apprehension, as it had been to the party pursued. Instead, something to gratify and cheer them on ; for, extending right and left, far as eye could reach, it seemed a very net, set by God’s own hand, to catch the criminals they were in chase of!

CHAPTER LXVII.

A GUARD CARELESSLY KEPT.

NOTWITHSTANDING Lunsford's assurances—at best rather dubious—the river could not be crossed at Westbury, without much difficulty and delay. The large horse-boat had received some damage, and it would take time to repair it. So Rupert and his following were constrained to keep on to Framilode Passage, three miles farther up stream.

It would bring them into dangerous proximity with Gloucester ; and should any of Massey's men be raiding down the river, they might find an enemy in front, even when over it. Still this was little likely, as Massey was believed to be himself out of Gloucester, operating on the northern side in the direction of Ledbury. Besides, Walwyn

must have had information of their being at Hollymead, to have drawn him into the Forest at that time of the night.

Still from behind was the Prince most apprehensive of danger ; now greater by the traverse of flooded tracts that must needs be made before they could reach the Passage. His failure to get across at Westbury seemed ominous of evil ; and he had grown more nervous than ever. What if he should fail also at Framilode ? Then, indeed, would he have to risk encounter with the redoubtable Forsters, outnumbering his escort, as he knew.

Already had they passed across several stretches of inundated ground ; at each the rear-guard being left on the dry land till the main body was well nigh through ; and then following on to the next. But now one of longer extent lay before them ; more than a mile of road leading on to the ferry being under water. Still the causeway, or rather where it ran, could be told by certain landmarks ;

and these Lunsford, as others of the escort, was acquainted with. But the flood was high over it, and the fording must be done cautiously, entailing loss of time. Moreover, if caught on the narrow way, with no chance of manœuvring, scarce width enough for an "about face," any party pursuing would have them at a disadvantage—almost at mercy.

Greater vigilance would be called for on the part of the rear-guard, its strength needing to be doubled. And this was done; the Prince, before taking to the water, himself inspecting it, and giving minute instructions to the officer in command. It was to be kept in ambush behind some trees that grew conveniently by; and, should pursuers appear, they were to be fired at, soon as within range; the firing continued, and the point held at all hazards, till the last moment of retreat practicable. If no pursuit, then the guard to follow as before, at signal of bugle sent back.

Reginald Trevor it was to whom the dangerous duty was assigned; and, as regarded courage and acquaintance with the ground, no officer of the escort was better fitted for it than he. None half so well, had his heart been in the work. Which it was not, but all the other way; for every movement he was making, every act he had been called upon to accomplish since leaving Bristol, was not only involuntary on his part, but sorely against his will. Forced upon him had been the ceremony of introducing Prince Rupert to the woman he himself loved; and now was he further compelled to be one of those conducting her to a prison—as it were to her grave! For, well knew he it would be the grave of her purity, the altar on which her young life's innocence was sure of being sacrificed.

In the past, sinful himself, profligate as most of the Cavalier school, he had of late become a much altered man. That one honest love of his life

had purified him, as such often does with natures like his. And now a great sorrow was to seal his purification; the object of his love about to suffer defilement, as it were before his face; and as it were, with himself aiding and abetting it!

His thoughts were black and bitter, his constrained duties repulsive. And as he stood by the flood's edge, looking after the escort that had commenced making way through it, he felt faint and sick at heart.

Nor took he any steps to carry out the commands of the Prince, either by placing the guard in ambush, or making other disposition of it. So the men remained in their saddles, exposed on the high ridge of the road, just as they had come up; receiving but one order from him: that, should pursuers appear, they were not to fire till he gave the word.

After which he separated from them, and walked his horse back along the Westbury road; stopping

at some fifty paces' distance, and there staying alone. The soldiers thought it strange, for they had overheard the instructions given him. But as they were acquainted with his courage, and could not doubt his fidelity to the King's cause, they made no remark about his apparent remissness, supposing it some strategic design.

Yet never was officer entrusted with guard less careful of his charge, than he at that moment. Caring, but not for its safety; instead, wishing it attacked, defeated, destroyed, though he himself might be the first to fall. For still another change had of late come over his sentiments—a political one. Brought about by the behaviour of Prince Rupert and his associate crew; which, for some time past, had been a very career of criminal proceeding. It had inspired Reginald Trevor with a disgust for Cavalierism, as his cousin Eustace two years before. Growing stronger day by day, the last day's and this night's work had decided him.

He was Royalist no more, though wearing the King's uniform. But he meant casting it off at the first opportunity ; was even now blaming himself for not having sought an opportunity since they passed through Mitcheldean ; reflecting whether, and in what way, such might yet be found.

As he sate in his saddle, listening, glad would he have been to hear hoof-strokes in the direction of Westbury ; to see horsemen approaching, with the hostile war-cry "For the Parliament !" That might still save Vaga Powell, and nothing else could. In another hour she would be across the Severn, and on for Berkeley Castle, whither he must follow. But with no hope of being able to do anything for the doomed girl. On the one side, as the other, all powerless to protect her, even with the sacrifice of his own life. And at that moment he would have laid it down for her ; so much had generosity, love's offspring, mastered the selfishness of his nature.

An interval of profound silence followed ; the only sounds heard being the screams of wild fowl flying low over the flooded meadows, the occasional stamp of a restive steed among those of the guard, and the plunging of nigh two hundred others far off in the water, gradually becoming less distinct as they waded farther.

But, ere long, something else broke upon the night's stillness, as it reached the ear of Reginald Trevor, causing him to start in his saddle. There sate he, listening and vigilant ; the sparkle of his eyes proclaiming it no sound that alarmed him, but one welcome and joy-giving.

A dull pattering as of horses' hoofs—hundreds—making way over soft ground, or along a muddy road. And so it was, the road from Westbury, the horses ridden by men in military formation, as the practised ear of the young soldier told him. But no other noise, save the trample ; no voice of man, nor note of bugle.

Soldiers were they notwithstanding; and pursuing soldiers, led by one who knew how to carry pursuit to a successful issue. For it was Walwyn's Horse.

Still at a gallop, their hoof-strokes were quickly nearer, sounding clearer. For there was no taking up of trail to delay them now. Away over the white water they saw a long dark line, serried, by a turn in the route which brought Rupert's following quarter-flank towards them; saw, and knew it to be that they were after.

At the same time seen themselves by Reginald Trevor, who rode back upon his guard. But not to inspire it to resistance, nor place it in a position of defence. Instead, he seemed irresolute, uncertain whether to make stand or retreat. His men, heavy Dragoons, had unslung their dragon-muzzled muskets, and awaited the word "Fire!" But no such word was spoken, no order given. Even when the approaching horsemen were charging up

to them, shouting "For God and Parliament!" even then, no command from their officer to meet or withstand the charge.

Nor did they then wish it; they saw the assailants were ten to their one; it was too late, even for retreat. Should he call "Quarter!" they were ready to chorus it.

And just that called he, the instant after, to a man among the foremost of the charging party—his cousin! Their swords came together with a clash, Eustace the first to speak.

"At last!" he exclaimed. "At last we've met to keep our promise made. 'No Quarter!' I cry it!"

"And I cry 'Quarter'—beg it."

Never dropped blade quicker down from threatening thrust than that of Eustace Trevor; never was combatant more surprised by the behaviour of an adversary.

"What do you mean?" he asked, in utter astonishment.

"That I fight no more for Prince, or King. Henceforth, if they'll have it, my sword's at the service of the Parliament."

"God bless me, Rej; how glad I am to hear you say that! And so near making mince-meat of one another!"

"Not of one another, Eust. You might have done that with me—may still, if you feel spiteful."

"Good Heavens! cousin; what has come over you? But I won't question now; there's no time."

"There isn't. See yonder. Rupert and Lunsford, with the Powells as their prisoners."

"We know all that. But where are the ruffians taking them?"

"Berkeley first; then Bristol. They're making to cross at Framilode Passage. It's but a short way beyond."

"They shall never cross it—can't before we come up with them. You'll be with us now, Rej?"

"I will."

The strange episode, and dialogue, took up but a few seconds' time; during which Rob Wilde, with a half-score files of Foresters, had disarmed the unresisting rear-guard. It was now under guard itself, and all ready for continuing the pursuit.

And continued it was instantaneously; Sir Richard, at the head of his green-coats, spurring straight into the flood, and on after the red ones, without further precaution either of silence or concealment. For he knew they would be seen now.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

A FIGHT IN A FLOOD.

STILL but half-way across the inundated tract, and up to their saddle-girths in water, Rupert and his escort were floundering on. As already said, they marched "by twos"—this necessitated by the narrowness of the causeway—and so were lengthened in line. Two hundred horse in file formation take up a long stretch of road, however close the order.

They had not yet sighted the enemy behind, nor had any intimation that one was there. For the snapping up of the guard had been done with little noise, the few shouts uttered being inaudible to them amid the continuous splashing and plunging of their own horses.

It was only after the pursuing party was well out into the flood, clear of the tree-shadowed shore, that some of the hindmost, chancing to look back, saw what they took to be their rear-guard in the water and riding after them. Saw it with surprise, as the signal for its advance had not been given; no note of bugle sounded. Neither could it be in retreat, driven in. There had been no firing, not a shot; and, by the Prince's orders, there should have been a prolonged fusilade. Guard of his, rear or van, retiring from its post without execution of his commands, had better have stayed and delivered itself up to the enemy.

Well knowing this, they who first sighted the pursuers, thinking them of their own, were enough astonished to give way to ejaculations. Which ran along the line quick as lightning.

"What is it?" demanded he at the head, on hearing them.

"The rear-guard, your Highness," answered one away at the back. "They're coming on after us."

"Halt!" shouted the Prince, in a voice of thunder, half-wheeling his horse, spurring out to the utmost edge of firm footing, and, with craned neck, looking back land-ward.

For a time to see nothing much beyond the tail end of his escort. Only the grey glimmer of water, with here and there the top of a pollard willow. For the capricious clouds had once more muffled the moon.

But he heard something; the sound of the wading horses, that made by his own now ceased from their being at a stand.

And soon he saw the moving ones; the clouds, by like caprice, having quickly drawn off their screen, letting full moonlight down upon the water. Saw them with alarm; for a dark mass was that in motion, too dark and too large for

the score or so of files that had been detached as a guard.

"*Gott, Colonel!*" he exclaimed, "there are more men there than we left with Trevor. And why should he be coming on contrary to orders? It cannot be he!"

"Very strange if it be, Prince," rejoined Lunsford, the colonel spoken to; "and stranger still if not."

"Could a party have slipped past without the guard seeing them?"

"Hardly possible, your Highness; unless by some swimming, and a long roundabout way. These seem to come direct from it."

The two talked hurriedly, and with dismay upon their faces. For the dark mysterious thing, still drawing nigher and nearer, seemed some unearthly monster—a hydra approaching to destroy them.

There was no time for further conjecturing.

Friend or enemy, it must be met face to face; and Rupert, commanding the "about," put spur to his horse and started towards the rear of the line.

Time elapsed ere he could reach it. The deep water, with the men wheeling in file, impeded him; and, before he was half way rearward, there were shots, shouts, and the clashing of steel—all the sounds of a conflict. The monster had closed up, and declared its character, as could be told by the hostile war words "King!" and "Parliament!" fiercely commingling.

Never shone moon on a stranger affair in the way of fight. Two long strings of horsemen confronting one another on a narrow causeway, where less than half a score of each could come to blows; no engaging in line, no turning, or flank attack, possible. And all up to the saddle flaps in water; up to the horses' hips where the fighting was hand to hand.

Nor for long did it last. Little more than a minute after coming to close quarters the Royalists found themselves overmatched, and began to give way. File after file went down before their impetuous assailants, sabred, or shot out of their saddles, till at length they doubled back on their line in retreat towards its former front. Some, in panic, forsook the causeway altogether, plunging into the flood on either side, in the hope to escape by swimming afar off.

Sword in hand, with curses on his lips, Rupert met the rout, bursting his way through the broken ranks, slashing right and left in an endeavour to stem the retreat. More than one of his own men fell before his desperate fury. But on reaching the rear, he had to cross blades with a man who was his master at sword-play, and all the skill appertaining. Which he knew, soon as coming to the "engage," and in his antagonist recognising Sir Richard Walwyn.

It was quick work between them ; at the very first lunge from guard, the Prince's sword getting whipped out of his hand, and sent whirling off into the water ! The old trick by which Sir Richard had disarmed the ex-gentleman usher.

With a fierce oath Rupert drew a pistol from his holster, and was about to fire at his adroit adversary, when another face presented itself before him, that of a man he had better reason to shoot down.

"Dog ! Traitor ! Turncoat !" he shouted, in tone of vengeful anger. "'Tis to you we owe this ! I give you death in payment !" And the shot sped, tumbling Reginald Trevor out of the saddle.

But there was still a Trevor on horseback to confront the Prince, with sword already fleshed and blade dripping blood. A touch of his spur brought him face to face with Rupert, and alone. For, just as the latter, Sir Richard had caught

sight of another man he more wished to have dealings with—Lunsford—and dashed straight towards him.

But not to attain close quarters. In the cowardly ex-lieutenant of the Tower there was neither fight nor stand. The sight of Colonel Walwyn was of itself enough to palsy his hands ; alone the bridle one obeying him. And with it, wrenching his horse round, he made ignominious retreat.

No more did the other pair get engaged. Rupert had but his second pistol, which, being discharged at Eustace Trevor, fortunately without effect, left him weaponless ; and, seeing all his escort in retreat, he turned tail too, soon disappearing amid the ruck.

The route now complete, with the scarlet coats it was *sauve qui peut* ; with the green ones only a question of cutting down the panic-stricken fugitives, or making prisoner those who cried

“Quarter!” And most cried that—shouted it to the utmost strength of their lungs.

On went the victorious Foresters along the flooded way, alternately sabreing and capturing—the big sergeant and Hubert doing their full share of both—on till they came to a party of captives they had not taken. Nor guarded these; their late guards having been too glad to get away, leaving them to themselves.

“Sabrina!” “Richard!”—“Vaga!” “Eustace!”

Four names, pronounced in joyous exclamation amid the din, and by four distinct voices; all with the epithet “dear” conjoined.

Not another word then, not another moment there; for the pursuit must be continued. The capture of Prince Rupert would be a thing of consequence, independent of all private feelings; and Sir Richard longed to settle scores with Lunsford. So on went he, and his, in chase of the now scattered escort.

But not again to come up with the pair of profligates. The stoppage, short as it was, had given them time to make Framilode Ferry; where, leaping from their horses, and into a light boat, they were out of sword's reach, and range of bullet, before the pursuers could close upon them.

Still within earshot of angry speech, however, hurled after them by the triumphant Foresters, with many a taunt, many the vile epithet bestowed.

A degradation deserved; and other men than they would have felt its sting and shame. But not this scion of Royalty, toast, type, and model of Cavalierism. Happy at having escaped with a whole skin, he but laughed back, rejoicing in the life still left him for future crimes to be committed.

And many the one was he afterwards guilty of; though short from that time was his rule in the city of Bristol. Once again, and soon, was it

enfladed by an armed force, not for siege or lea-guer, but instant assault. For the man who com-manded was he who, later on, gave laws to all England, gave her the only glimpse of real liberty she has ever enjoyed—the only gleam of true glory. When Cromwell stood before Bristol's gates, and said "Surrender!" it was in no tone of doubting requisition, but stern demand. The son of Elector Palatinate, hearing it, hastened to comply, but too glad to get terms for his life.

Which he got, with his liberty, and more—far too much being conceded by his generous con-queror—permitted to march out, bag and baggage, with a long retinue of bullies, sycophants, and strumpets, leaving behind a longer list of victims, among them the ill-starred Clarisse Lalande. As he passed away from the place he had made a "place of bawdry," it was amid jeers and bitter curses.

A scene pleasanter to describe—one more congenial to honest pen—occurred shortly after in the sister city of Gloucester, within its ancient Cathedral, at whose altar simultaneously stood four couples in the act of being made man and wife.

Wedded they were, and their names entered in the big book of marriage registry; from which the writer does not deem it necessary to copy them *verbatim*. Enough to give them as already known to the reader; the brides being Sabrina and Vaga Powell, Winifred, and Gwenthian; their respective bridegrooms Colonel Sir Richard Walwyn, Captain Eustace Trevor, Sergeant Wilde, and Trumpeter Hubert.

While being made happy, amid the many joyous faces around, one alone wore a cast of sadness, yet with resignation—that of Reginald Trevor, still living. For the shot which struck him out of his saddle on the flooded causeway of Framilode had but wounded him, and he was well again.

In body, not spirit; for within his heart was a wound that might never be well. He had suffered bitterly, was still suffering; but with soul now purified and subdued was better able to bear it, and bore it manfully. Generously too; for just as, when meeting his cousin outside Hollymead gate he had offered him his sword to avenge defeat, now honoured he him by his presence at a ceremony which was as the sacrifice of himself.

* * * * *

Still another incident calls for record: of date some six years later, and some months preceding that event which again brought England's liberty to its lowest ebb, her glory to greatest shame—the so-called Restoration. Before this curse of curses came, Ambrose Powell, predicting it—foreseeing evil to him and his—gathered up his household gods, and took ship with them to the colonies across the Atlantic, accompanied by all the personages who had appeared at that marriage

ceremony in the cathedral of Gloucester, and by many more—Cadger Jack among them.

Reginald Trevor, too, was of the colonizing band ; long become accustomed to bearing the broken heart, which “brokenly lives on,” with but little pain, growing ever less. For he could now look upon Vaga Powell as his cousin’s wife ; to himself as a kind sister—almost without thought of the unhappy past.

Well was it for all of them they went away, to become part of that people, the freest, most powerful, and most prosperous on earth. Had they stayed, it would have been to suffer persecution ; the fate of all who then fought for England’s freedom, save the false ones and cravens, who cried “Quarter !”—on their knees, basely begged it from that loathsome monster of iniquity—the “Merry Monarch.”

And Rupert, Prince of Cavaliers, what became of him ? He too returned with the Restoration—

another of its curses—fresh from a long career of piracy in the West Indian seas, to be made Lord High Admiral of England, with no end of other honours and emoluments heaped upon him ! To live for years after a life of luxurious ease, die “in the purple,” and be buried with all pomp and ceremony. For though a pirate, he was still a Prince of the Blood Royal !

THE END.





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